MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Rope Burns

(AKA Million Dollar Baby)

screenplay
by
Paul Haggis

based on the short stories
by
F.X.Toole

BLACK. The SOUND of a racing heart. Then:

SCRAP V.O.
Only ever met one man I wouldn't want to fight.

1 INT. L.A. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 1

BIG WILLIE LITTLE sits sweating on his stool in the corner of the ring. He's African-American, a heavyweight, and he's cut bad under the right eye. His CUT MAN jabs coagulant into the wound; looks up to the manager standing over him.

CUT MAN
I can't stop it.

The manager, FRANKIE DUNN, pushes him aside.

FRANKIE
Get outta the building, you useless tit.

Frankie drops to one knee and we see his face. It's a face that could only have been cast by generations of potato-eaters, the kind of face that survives famines and frustrates invaders. Look deep into his eyes and you can see this man has been knocked to his knees, but he's always come up before the count. Always will. Frankie picks up the kit and goes to work on Big Willie. We're mesmerized by Frankie's hands. It's like watching a top surgeon going for a world speed record.

SCRAP V.O.
When I met him he was already the best cut man in the business. Started training and managing in the 60's, but he never lost his gift.

Frankie cleans and flushes the wound with an adrenaline solution, uses his thumbs to work the blood away from the gash and packs it with a coagulant-rich salve.

BIG WILLIE
You stop it?

Frankie glances at his stop watch: 36 seconds elapsed.

FRANKIE
Can't, Willie.
(MORE)

1 CONTINUED: 1

The RING DOCTOR wants to see Willy's face.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
He's fine.

RING DOCTOR
He ain't if you don't stop that bleeding. I'll give you one more round.

Ring Doctor moves away as the ref whistles the five second warning.

BIG WILLIE
What do we do? Tell me what to do.

FRANKIE
Just let him hit you.

Frankie climbs out of the ring, leaving Big Willie staring at him, confused, as the bell rings.

SCRAP V.O.
Sometimes there's just nothing you can do.

Willie tosses a couple of questioning looks back to Frankie before he steps into punching range.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Cut's too wide, too close to the bone, maybe you got a severed vein...

Big Willie, unwilling to follow Frankie's instructions, keeps protecting his face, his opponent trying to get to the wound. Frankie YELLS something from the corner. Something we can't hear over the din.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
...or you just can't get the coagulant deep enough.
(MORE)

Willie reluctantly drops his guard. His opponent delivers a neck-snapping blow to his cut eye. SILENCE as the camera screams into an extreme close up of Willie's wound... and in that second we "hear" the coagulant being absorbed deep into the gash, "hear" the blood vessels sealing, then we fly right back out into the fight and the ROAR of the crowd.

Willy backs off, looks to Frankie, who screams for him to get in there and start punching.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2) 1

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
There are all kinds of combinations you come up against down in the different layers of meat. And Frankie knew how to work every one.

Big Willie lands his first solid combination and a cheer rises up.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Harder thing to stop is looking.

FACES

in the crowd. Most of them ugly. Screaming for blood.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
People love violence. They'll watch a cock slash a rooster's throat; they slow down at car wrecks to check for bodies. They'll stand outside a bar, watch two friends stab each other with knives. Same people claim to love boxing. They got no idea what it is.

We find...

A GIRL

fair, thin, looks early thirties; call her MAGGIE. She's standing in the tunnel, a bruise swelling on her cheek, her hair matted from dried sweat, a worn boxing robe pulled around her shoulders.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Boxing is about respect.

Her eyes stay fixed on...

FRANKIE

shouting instructions from Willie's corner. Big Willie clutches his opponent, struggling to understand Frankie.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Gettin' it for yourself...
(MORE)

Frankie motions two low body lefts and an overhand right.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (3) 1

WILLIE

gets it, breaks free and:

MAGGIE

watches as Big Willie delivers two devastating lefts to the body, and an overhand right that sends his opponent sprawling to the canvas.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
And takin' it away from the other guy.

The crowd roars as the referee counts out the opponent. Maggie shifts her look to:

FRANKIE

stepping into the ring. Big Willie picks him up and hugs him.

2 INT. ARENA -- CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOMS -- NIGHT 2

Maggie, in jeans and an old jacket, waits outside the dressing room. The door opens and Frankie steps out, calling back in:

FRANKIE
I'll warm up the car.

And walks off down the corridor. Maggie catches up.

MAGGIE
Mr. Dunn?

FRANKIE
I owe you money?

MAGGIE
No, sir.

FRANKIE
I know your mother?

MAGGIE
Don't rightly know, sir.

FRANKIE
Then what do you want?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

MAGGIE
I was on the undercard, won my fight, too.

FRANKIE
Good for you.

MAGGIE
You happen to see it?

FRANKIE
Nope.

MAGGIE
I did pretty good. Thought you might be interested in trainin' me.

FRANKIE
Don't train girls.

MAGGIE
Maybe you should. People see me fight say I'm pretty tough.

FRANKIE
Girlie, tough ain't enough.

He punches through the door and walks off. Maggie watches him until the door closes.

3 EXT. ARENA PARKING LOT -- NIGHT 3

Nearly empty. Big Willie comes out, heads through it, passing HOGAN, a manager in his fifties, whose on his way back.

HOGAN
(shrugs)
It's a mistake.

Willie gives him a look and keeps walking, finding Frankie pushing his piece of shit Plymouth Valiant out of the parking space. Willie drops his bag on the Valiant's hood and pushes alongside Frankie.

BIG WILLIE
Cars should be able to back up, Frankie.

FRANKIE
Just push.

3 CONTINUED: 3

BIG WILLIE
What'd Hogan want?

FRANKIE
He offered us a title fight.

BIG WILLIE
Bout time.

FRANKIE
I turned him down.

Frankie drops into the driver's seat. Willie gets in the other side, looks to Frankie for an explanation.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Two-three more fights, you'll be ready.

BIG WILLIE
Been two-three more fights a long time now, Frankie.

FRANKIE
You get one shot at the title, Willie. Lose, it may never come back around. Two-three more fights, you'll be ready.

BIG WILLIE
(beat, accepts it)
Whatever you say, Frankie.

And they drive off.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie liked to say that boxing is an unnatural act...

4 INT. CITY BUS -- NIGHT 4

Maggie rides along Olympic, the only one on the bus.

SCRAP V.O.
That everything in boxing is backwards.

For a brief second she allows the fear in; fear that she'll break before she gets what she's after.

5 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW - CULVER CITY -- NIGHT 5

With some effort and more than a little pain he drops to one knee beside his single bed, crosses himself.

SCRAP V.O.
Sometimes best way to deliver a punch is to step back.

FRANKIE
Dear Lord, do your best to protect Katy. Annie, too. Other than that, you know what I want, Lord, not gonna repeat myself.

SCRAP V.O.
But step back too far, you ain't fighting at all.

He crosses himself.

6 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- MORNING 6

Post mass, the last few parishioners exit. Frankie is the last out the door.

FRANKIE
Beautiful sermon, Father, made me weep.

FATHER HORVATH
What's confusing you this week?

FRANKIE
It's the one God, three God thing again.

FATHER HORVATH
Frankie, most people figure out by Kindergarten that it's about faith.

FRANKIE
Is it sorta like Snap, Crackle, Pop, all in one big box?

FATHER HORVATH
You're standing on the steps of my church comparing God to Rice Crispies? The only reason you come to mass every day is to try and wind me up; it's not gonna happen this morning.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: 6

FRANKIE
I really am confused about this.

FATHER HORVATH
No, you aren't.

FRANKIE
I am.

FATHER HORVATH
Then here's your answer: there's one God! Anything else, cause I'm busy?

FRANKIE
What about the Holy Ghost?

FATHER HORVATH
He's an expression of God's love.

FRANKIE
--And Jesus?

FATHER HORVATH
Son of God, don't play stupid!

FRANKIE
So, that makes him what, a demigod?

FATHER HORVATH
There are no demigods, you fuckin' pagan! Did you write your daughter?!

FRANKIE
Absolutely.

FATHER HORVATH
Now you're lying to a priest. You know what? Take a day off, don't come to mass tomorrow.

The priest disappears into the church. Frankie smiles and walks off.

7 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- MORNING 7

Four hip looking customers leave their table a complete mess. Maggie, wearing an ill-fitting uniform, steps in to bus it.

SCRAP V.O.
Some people'd say the most important thing a fighter can have is heart.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: 7

She scoops up the tip: seventy-five cents.

8 INT. THE HIT PIT -- DAY 8

A basement gym on 5th Street, right in the heart of Skid Row, downtown LA. Everyone sweats, even those who are just hanging out on the short bleachers that circle the two rings.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie'd say show me a fighter who's nothing but heart and I'll show you a man waiting for a beating.

Trainers, swaying like cobras, work their fighters, isolated in the noise and the steam, some whisper, others yell. Boom boxes blare different music from four corners, making it sound like a cell block.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Think I only ever met one fighter who was all heart.

DANGER BARCH, a scrawny young farmer white boy, throws a flurry of pitty-pat punches into the air, then announces:

DANGER
My name's Dangerous Dillard Fightin' Flippo Bam-Bam Barch outta Broward County, Texas--

FREEZE him in mid sentence.

SCRAP V.O.
Danger showed up a coupl'a years back.

9 EXT. SKID ROW - FLASHBACK -- DAY 9

Danger steps outta the passenger seat of a beat up old Dodge pickup, looks around.

SCRAP V.O.
He'd come visitin' L.A. with Ervel, his momma's new boyfriend.

The Dodge disappears in a cloud of exhaust.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Apparently Ervel got lost and ended up back in Texas.
(MORE)

Danger walks off down the sidewalk.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: 9

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Danger looked for him for about a week. 'Fore he introduced himself.

10 INT. THE HIT PIT -- DAY 10

Danger stands across the counter from EDDIE SCRAP IRON DUPRIS, a long-retired fighter who cleans up around the gym in exchange for living in the back room. In his day, Scrap was a hell of a fighter, and he still keeps himself fit. He lost the sight in one eye years ago.

DANGER
I gots nothin' against niggers.

SCRAP
Glad to hear it.

Scrap gives him a paper cup full of water.

DANGER
Lotsa people where I comes from does, but my mamma taught me not to cause hurt to no man, niggers or not.

SCRAP
You got a good mamma. Anything else I can do for you?

Danger thinks hard.

SCRAP V.O.
It was just one of those questions you ask, but Danger wanted to give it his best answer.

DANGER
I'd likes to become the Welterweight Champion of the world.

11 INT. HIT PIT - BACK TO THE PRESENT - DAY 11

As Danger unfreezes and picks up where he left off.

DANGER
-- and I challenge the Motor City Cobra Thomas Hit Man Hearns to fight me for the WBA Welterweight Championship of the whole world!

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: 11

SHAWRELLE BERRY, a tough young lightweight, wraps his hands as he sits on a nearby bench with some gym rat buddies -- one of them his sparring partner, OMAR.

SHAWRELLE
Flippy, you ain't even ranked. To get ranked, you gotta have at least one fight.

DANGER
I'll fight any man, anytime!

The gym rats laugh.

SHAWRELLE
You're a brave man. Wanra get in the ring, go a few rounds with me?

Scrap passes with a bucket, mop and bottle of Clorox.

SCRAP
Leave him be, Shawrelle. Danger, get back to your training.

DANGER
Will do, Mist Scrap!

Danger goes back to throwing his best pitty-pat punches into the air. Shawrelle and his buddies laugh and mimic him.

SCRAP V.O.
Shawrelle Berry had a left hook that could move a tank. But he had a heart the size of a split pea.

Frankie steps out of his back office, throwing a look toward Danger as he heads to the front desk.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Frankie bought The Hit Pit from Bobby Malone seventeen years ago. Bobby wanted to move to Florida and Frankie wanted some security. Bobby died while he was packing and Frankie found out most gyms lose money.

Frankie steps behind the counter to check the log.

FRANKIE
(to Scrap)
I thought I told you Danger couldn't work out here anymore.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2) 11

SCRAP
The boy's not hurting anybody.

FRANKIE
He's hurting me. He's breaking my heart watching him punch the air like it's gonna punch back.

Frankie notices the Clorox bottle.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
How many times I tell you that bleach is bleach? Why do you have to buy the stuff that costs more?

SCRAP
Cause it smells better.

FRANKIE
It's bleach. It smells like bleach!

Frankie heads back to his office. Big Willie enters, nods to Scrap, who's now behind the counter.

BIG WILLIE
Hey, Scrap.

SCRAP
Hey, Mr. Willie.

Scrap watches Big Willie passing a couple fighters, saying hello, slapping hands. Willie passes a couple slickly dressed managers, cracking jokes to each other. One is SALLY MENDOZA, the other is MICKEY MACK.

BIG WILLIE
Hey, Sally.

SALLY
Hey, Willie. Nice fight, people are talking.

Mickey doesn't look at Willie, Willie doesn't look at Mickey. Scrap files this away.

12 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY 12

Frankie sits at his desk reading a small, leather bound book and trying to pronounce the words.

FRANKIE
Tá cúl fionn is dhá shúil ghlasa agat.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: 12

He looks up and Scrap is watching him from the doorway.

SCRAP
What the hell kind of language is that?

FRANKIE
What do you want?

SCRAP
Just thought you'd want to know you got a fighter out there not talking to another manager.

FRANKIE
Not talking to him?

SCRAP
And not just any manager, Mickey Mack.

FRANKIE
So, you came in to tell me Big Willie is not talking to Mickey Mack.

SCRAP
Not a word, neither one of them.

FRANKIE
I'm trying to read here.

SCRAP
If you think that's more important.

Scrap walks behind Frankie's chair, to the window that looks out on the gym.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
So, who's your new girl?

This gets Frankie's attention. He turns and looks out at the gym. Sees:

MAGGIE

pounding the heavy bag.

FRANKIE (O.S.)
Oh, Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2) 12

BACK WITH FRANKIE AND SCRAP

SCRAP
I'd hurry; she keep hittin' it like that she gonna break her wrists.

13 INT. HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS 13

Maggie works the heavy bag as Frankie approaches.

FRANKIE
You wasted your money. I don't train girls.

MAGGIE
Thought you might change your mind.

FRANKIE
Gotta be a dozen trainers around looking for girls, you'll have no trouble finding one.

MAGGIE
Don't hardly need a dozen, boss. You'll do fine.

FRANKIE
I'm not your boss, so don't be calling me that.
(heading off/calls)
Willie, you ready to work?

BIG WILLIE
Anytime.

MAGGIE
If I stop calling you boss, will you train me?

FRANKIE
No.

MAGGIE
Then I might just as well keep calling you it.

Maggie goes back to working the bag.

SCRAP V.O.
She came from South-Western Missouri, the hills outside the scratch-ass
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: 13

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Ozark town of Theodosia, set in the cedars and oak trees somewhere between nowhere and good-bye.

14 INT. VENICE RESTAURANT -- DAY 14

As a couple patrons toss condescending looks in her direction.

SCRAP V.O.
She grew up knowing one thing: she was trash, and she weren't never gonna be looked at anyway else.

We find Maggie, in her Salvation Army street clothes, being interviewed by the OWNER, who studies her application.

OWNER
So, you can only do dinners?

MAGGIE
I'm working breakfasts somewhere else, sir. I need the rest of the day to train.

OWNER
You bathe every day?

MAGGIE
I'm sorry?

OWNER
Had another Hillbilly girl working here, all the customers complained of the stink. She never washed.

MAGGIE
I bathe every day, sir.

OWNER
Make sure you do.

He walks back to the kitchen. And she doesn't let on for a second how deeply humiliated she is by this.

SCRAP V.O.
She'd come eighteen hundred miles, but Theodosia was still just over the hill.

15 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 15

Frankie enters, passing Maggie who works the heavy bag.

MAGGIE
Working the bag, boss.

FRANKIE
Not your boss and that bag's working you.

Maggie watches Frankie enter the office, goes back to hitting the bag, trying to figure out what he meant.

16 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE 16

Frankie finds Scrap drinking a cup of coffee and watching Maggie through the window.

FRANKIE
Give her her money back.

SCRAP
You sure?

FRANKIE
Why? How much she pay?

SCRAP
Six months.

FRANKIE
Jesus Christ.

SCRAP
So, I'll just go give her it back.

FRANKIE
Don't be a smart ass. Woman expects me to throw away six months dues to get rid of her, she's out of her mind. Just don't encourage her.
(notices)
What the hell is Danger looking at?

THEIR POV THROUGH WINDOW

Danger is by the ice chest, holding a bottle of frozen water, looking at the top and the bottom, as if it's one of the seven wonders of the world.

16 CONTINUED: 16

BACK WITH FRANKIE AND SCRAP

SCRAP
Appears to be a bottle of water.

FRANKIE
He paying his dues?

SCRAP
Boy can't afford pants, you want him to pay dues?

FRANKIE
Get out of my office.

And Scrap exits, smiling.

17 INT. HIT PIT -- SHOWERS -- NIGHT 17

Scrap finishes mopping up and filling the soap dispensers. He checks it out; all the scrubbing in the world won't get this place any cleaner. He hits the lights.

18 INT. HIT PIT - FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT 18

Scrap flicks the breakers and the lights in the gym cut off one bank at a time. Scrap stops as he hears something, moves out to the gym, sees:

19 MAGGIE 19

Alone in the gym, drenched in sweat, exhausted and frustrated, but still working the heavy bag and looking just as awkward. She stops, breathing heavy.

SCRAP
Can't think of it as a bag.

She looks as he walks forward.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
I'm not a trainer, but I can show you this, if you want.

MAGGIE
Appreciate any help I can get.

Scrap gives the heavy bag a shove and starts moving around it, maintaining the same distance as he slides forward and back, pivots and moves.

19 CONTINUED: 19

SCRAP
Think of it as a man; movin' back, to the side, toward you. Watch him, he'll tell you when to hit.

As it swings toward him:

SCRAP (CONT'D)
Hit now, he just gonna knock you back...
(demonstrates)
...smother your punches, take your balance. Don't punch until he starts away from you.

Now he throws an effective combination, pivots and does it again, each punch landing solidly. Swings it for her. She tries it, awkwardly.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
Keep moving, rotate. That way your head's always movin' and you always have one shoulder back ready to fire a power shot.

She fires her first effective shot. Smiles.

MAGGIE
Like that?

SCRAP
You get this down then start on the speed bag.

She looks around.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
You do have a speed bag.

Her look tells him she doesn't.

20 INT. STORAGE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS 20

Scrap opens a big locker -- inside are mops, buckets and all kinds of ancient gym equipment. He pulls a worn and dusty speed bag off the top shelf.

MAGGIE
I'll just borrow it till I can buy my own.

20 CONTINUED: 20

SCRAP
You go home now.

MAGGIE
I walk out with you?

SCRAP
I am home.

She sees a cot, a chair and a Sally-Anne dresser. An ancient hot plate and an even older TV fill out the corner.

MAGGIE
It's nice.

Scrap laughs.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Would it bother you much if I worked a little longer?

SCRAP
Just pull the door closed after you.

21 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT 21

Maggie works the heavy bag, remembering Scrap's lesson, the same punch, same move over and over. As...

SCRAP

watches her from the shadows of Frankie's office.

SCRAP V.O.
If there's magic in boxing, it's the magic of fighting battles beyond endurance. Beyond cracked ribs, ruptured kidneys and detached retinas.

22 EXT. OLYMPIC BLVD. - DAWN 22

A bus passes almost empty.

SCRAP V.O.
It's the magic of risking everything, for a dream that nobody sees but you.

23 INT. RTD BUS -- CONTINUOUS 23

Maggie rides, the lone passenger. Happy.

24 INT. THE HIT PIT - DAY 24

Frankie works the punch mitts with Big Willy on the far side of the room.

FRANKIE
Jab, jab, double up. Jab. Do it again. One-two hook. Do it again.

Maggie approaches the heavy bag pulling on her gloves, throwing a look to Frankie, who doesn't look back. Maggie goes to work on the bag.

Shawrelle works a nearby heavybag as Omar holds. Shawrelle notices Maggie.

SHAWRELLE
Hey, Flippy.

Danger looks up from trying to jump rope.

SHAWRELLE (CONT'D)
Flippy, come here! I found someone you can beat!

DANGER
I don't fights women.

Shawrelle circles, looking Maggie up and down as she pounds away.

SHAWRELLE
This here a woman? Let me look, you might be right, Danger.

FRANKIE

notices. Doesn't like what he sees, but he's not about to do anything.

FRANKIE
(to Big Willie)
Two jabs, right-hand...

SCRAP

looks up from the comic book he's reading.

24 CONTINUED: 24

SHAWRELLE

SHAWRELLE
There's her little titties! Barely even a mouthful.

MAGGIE
(still working)
Saw your last fight, Shawrelle. Spent so much time face down I thought the canvas had titties.

Shawrelle's buddies razz him. Danger snickers.

DANGER
Canvas had titties.

SHAWRELLE
(to Omar)
You gonna work or you gonna laugh?

Which makes Omar laugh harder.

DANGER
Look at me! I'm Shawrelle!

And Danger falls flat on the floor, mouthing the mat. Shawrelle simmers as everyone else busts a gut.

FRANKIE

allows himself a small smile.

FRANKIE
Two jabs, right-hand, hook. Do it again. Enough.

Big Willie stops, breathing hard. Frankie tosses him a towel, uses a second to wipe off some of the sweat.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
I'll give you a rub down.

BIG WILLIE
Can't, Frankie. My middle one's got piano lesson. Told Grace I'd drive her.

FRANKIE
Grace's car not working?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2) 24

BIG WILLIE
Hates that car. Wants her old one back. Dealer won t do it, says he's already got a buyer.

FRANKIE
Want me to talk to the dealer?

BIG WILLIE
I'd appreciate that.

Big Willie heads out as Frankie takes his equipment back to his office, passing Scrap.

SCRAP
Man's a rub down whore and today he don't want one?

FRANKIE
You ever do any work around here?

SCRAP
Not my job I'd worry about, if I was you.

Frankie drops onto the bench and starts stowing his gear in the bag. Scrap pretends to just now notice Maggie.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
Little girl's starting to come along.

FRANKIE
Yeah. Almost as if somebody been helping her.

Maggie stops working, pulls out Scrap's old speed bag and snaps it in place.

SCRAP
Could be just a natural. Ask me, she's got something.

FRANKIE
She's got my speed bag, that's what she's got!

Frankie looks accusingly to Scrap.

SCRAP
Now where the hell you think she got that?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (3) 24

Frankie crosses to Maggie, who is having a hard time hitting the speed bag.

FRANKIE
I'm gonna need that bag back.

MAGGIE
This bag?

FRANKIE
Yeah, it's mine. And people know it's mine, so they're gonna think I'm training you.

MAGGIE
(still punching)
That such a bad thing, boss?

FRANKIE
Yes. Every time you touch it you lose me business.

MAGGIE
(tries to laugh it off)
I gotta agree, I am embarrassing myself.

She unsnaps the bag, hands it over.

FRANKIE
I just don't lend out my stuff.

MAGGIE
I understand.

FRANKIE
Listen, you seem like a real nice girl, so I'm gonna give you some advice.

MAGGIE
I'd appreciate that.

FRANKIE
You may find a trainer in here or some other gym, cause they're all looking for girls, it's like the new freak show. But if they take you on they're wasting your time. You're too old.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (4) 24

MAGGIE
Don't feel that old, boss.

FRANKIE
Yeah, well neither do I, but you don't see me fighting twenty-one year-olds. It takes four years to train a fighter. How old are you?

MAGGIE
Thirty two. Till my birthday.

FRANKIE
You wouldn't start training to be a ballerina at thirty-two, would you?

MAGGIE
Already been working it three years.

FRANKIE
And you can't even hit a speed bag; you had some real good training.

MAGGIE
Never had any, boss.

FRANKIE
I hate to say it, but it shows. Figure somebody should tell you the truth.

Maggie tries to hide how deeply this hurts her. She fails.

MAGGIE
Yeah. Sorry for using your bag, Mr. Dunn.

FRANKIE
Ah, Jesus, you're not gonna cry, are you?

MAGGIE
No, sir.

FRANKIE
Take the goddamn bag.

MAGGIE
No, you need it.

24 CONTINUED: (5) 24

FRANKIE
I haven't even seen it in twenty years, had three new ones since, take the damn thing.

MAGGIE
I'll just borrow it till I buy my own.

FRANKIE
Just don't lose it.

Frankie walks off, angry with himself. Passing Scrap, who is smiling.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
You give her anything else, you're fired.

Frankie slams his office door closed behind him. Scrap watches Maggie snap the bag back in and start over.

25 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- EVENING 25

Frankie sits in his kitchen, talking on the rotary phone.

FRANKIE
Hogan, your boy is the champ, so we won't split fifties, but if I don't see forty percent--

The doorbell rings.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
You call me when it's sixty forty or don't call back at all.

He hangs up.

THE FRONT DOOR

Frankie opens it, surprised to see Big Willie waiting, dressed in his best suit.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Willie?

BIG WILLIE
Hey, Frankie.

FRANKIE
Something wrong?

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: 25

BIG WILLIE
Sorry to come round to your house like this, I know you don't like people dropping in.

It's true but Frankie hides his discomfort. *

FRANKIE
You're not people, Willie, you're welcome anytime.

BIG WILLIE
I wanted to thank you for getting Grace's car back.

FRANKIE
I don't know if you should thank me, Willie. Paying an extra thousand for your own car ain't much of a favor.

BIG WILLIE
Grace broke out and cried when she saw it.
(beat)
I also need to talk to you about business.

FRANKIE
I was just on the phone with Hogan. Told him we'd be ready in September. We got everything done but the split.

BIG WILLIE
I gotta leave you, Frankie.

FRANKIE
(blind-sided)
Willie, the title is two fights away.

BIG WILLIE
It's not that. It's just like you said, I got one shot. If I win, I gotta make as much as I can while I can. I need somebody in the action, who can make things happen.
(even harder to say:)
And I gotta make the change before the fight. Only way this guy'd take me is he takes me to the title.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (2) 25

FRANKIE
So, Willie, I got you the title fight, but this guy's gonna take you there?

BIG WILLIE
Only way he'd do it. I'm sorry, Frankie. I know how long you been waiting for a title. I wanted it to be with me.

Willie exits.

26 EXT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- NIGHT 26

Frankie steps onto his front porch, watches Willie walk to his car.

FRANKIE
Mickey Mack's a business man, he can't teach ya nothing.

Willy turns, a deep sadness playing across his face.

BIG WILLIE
You already taught me everything I need to know.

Willie backs out of the drive as the PHONE RINGS inside. Frankie makes no move to go in and answer it.

SCRAP V.O.
There's some things people just don't want to hear.

27 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 27

It's slow time, late morning. Scrap wears the punch mitts for Danger, who has his hands in the air announcing:

DANGER
--and I challenge the Motor City Cobra Thomas Hit Man Hearns to fight me for the WBA Welterweight Championship of the whole world!

SCRAP V.O.
No one had the heart to tell Danger that Hearns retired years ago.

SCRAP
Danger, I'm wearin' these mitts for a reason.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: 27

DANGER
Workin' on my footwork, Mist Scrap.

Frankie enters, passing.

FRANKIE
Danger, throw a punch or get the hell out of my gym.

Frankie disappears into his office, as Danger thinks hard about punching.

SCRAP
You be thinking about that punch. I'll be right back.

MAGGIE

trying to get the swing of the speed bag, watches Scrap head to Frankie's office.

DANGER
Thinking how I'm gonna hit it hard, Mist Scrap!

28 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS 28

Frankie opens his little leather bound book and finds where he left off.

FRANKIE
(sounding it out)
Bier mé féin leat, is ná déan do dhe armad.

Scrap watches him from the door.

SCRAP
Heard about Willie. Cold. Dead Cold. Wouldn't be such a shame if you weren't so damn old.

FRANKIE
Least I can see through both eyes.

SCRAP
Didn't do you much good, did they?

FRANKIE
I got the gym. Don't need to be training fighters at my age.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: 28

SCRAP
Willie tell you why?

FRANKIE
Mickey's got the connections.

SCRAP
Ain't about connections. Bout you not believing in him.

FRANKIE
I found him, I stuck with him eight years because I didn't believe in him?

SCRAP
Coulda got him a title fight two years ago. Man knew that. Amazing he stuck around this long.

FRANKIE
Gettin' there and taking the belt home are two different things. I should just toss him in over his head, not protect him?

SCRAP
So, you were *protecting* him from being champ. Now it's making sense.

FRANKIE
How'd your manager do for you, Scrap? You were a hell of a fighter, better than Willie, he get you a title fight? Or did he bust you out banging your head into other people's fists until you lost your eye?

SCRAP
I had my shot. Went out swinging, no man can say I didn't.

FRANKIE
Yeah, I remember. Excuse me if I didn't want my fighter spending the second half of his life cleaning up other people's spit.

SCRAP
Yeah, you're right. You're the smart one. You the one learning Greek.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: (2) 28

FRANKIE
Gaelic. It's Gaelic.

SCRAP
You just protected yourself right out of a championship fight. How you say that in Gaelic?

Frankie goes back to his book.

29 INT. HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS 29

Maggie works at the speed bag, watches Scrap come out of the office and sit, stewing. She knows something just happened. MONTAGE BEGINS:

30 INT. VENICE RESTAURANT -- MORNING 30

Maggie buses a table. Slips the dirty dishes into the rubber tray, except for a half-eaten steak sandwich, which she carefully removes. She looks around, then wraps it in some scrap tin foil. She looks up to see the cook watching her.

MAGGIE
For my dog.

31 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 31

Maggie takes out her frustrations on the speed bag. The fighter next to her makes it circle in a perfect eight. Seeing that makes her hit it harder.

32 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- NIGHT 32

Maggie realizes some teenagers left without paying. Chases them out to...

33 THE PARKING LOT 33

The kids speed off, laughing at Maggie.

34 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT 34

Maggie cuts off the bite marks off the steak, puts it on a plate. She eats while piling coins into stacks.

35 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 35

The alarm goes off at 3:30 a.m.. She gets out of bed.

36 EXT. VENICE BIKE PATH NIGHT 36

Stripped down, Maggie runs the path, barely a soul in sight.

37 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 37

Maggie slams away at the heavy bag -- still flat footed, but really moving. Frankie glances at her from behind the counter, goes back to his work.

38 INT. VENICE RESTAURANT 38

Maggie finds a two dollar tip on the table soaking in a pool of spilled gravy. She wipes the bills clean, pockets them.

39 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- DAY 39

Maggie rolls her tips into wrappers as she eats some scraps.

40 INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE -- DAY 40

Maggie puts a new speed bag on the counter and digs out dozens of rolls of quarters, dimes, nickels and some crumpled singles. The cashier gives her a look that could kill.

41 INT. FRANKIE'S HOUSE - MONTAGE CONTINUES -- NIGHT 41

Frankie sits on the edge of his sofa, eyes fixed on a tiny TV set. There's a fight on the screen: Willie and the champ; each fighter taking a lot of punishment.

Frankie's face betrays every nuance of the match.

SCRAP V.O.
Boxing is an unnatural act.

The Champ throws a barrage of punches, going for a knockout.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Cause everything in it is backwards.

Frankie's feet shift slightly. We cut to the screen and see that Willie just did the same.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
You want to move to the left, you don't step left, you push on the right toe.
(MORE)

The champ keeps coming on strong. Willie's getting battered.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: 41

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
To move right, you use the left toe.

Frankie pushes right. So does Willy, just before he delivers two devastating lefts to the body and a stunning overhand right - the same move that Frankie called in his last fight.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Instead of running from the pain, like a sane person would do, you step into it.

The champ staggers. Frankie's feet shift forward as Willie steps right in and puts the champ down for the count. The crowd roars. Frankie turns off the set, sits back, allows himself a smile. It fades after a second.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Everything in boxing is backwards.

42 INT. BROADWAY DINER -- NIGHT 42

Frankie drops into a seat at the counter, scans the menu. The counterman places half a cup of coffee before him.

COUNTERMAN
Cheeseburger?

FRANKIE
You still make your lemon pie with that canned filling crap?

COUNTERMAN
Got no idea how they make it.

FRANKIE
Cheeseburger.

The counterman places the order. Frankie fills the other half of his cup with cream.

43 EXT. HIT PIT - ALLEY ENTRANCE -- NIGHT 43

Frankie bangs at the basement door, a takeout container in his other hand. Scrap opens it, looking like he was in bed.

FRANKIE
You want a cheeseburger?

SCRAP
You bought me a cheeseburger?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: 43

SCRAP (CONT'D)
I never seen you buy anybody a cheeseburger.

FRANKIE
Ordered it, couldn't eat it.

SCRAP
So the planet can go back to spinnin'.

44 INT. HIT PIT - SCRAP'S BACK ROOM -- CONTINUOUS 44

The TV is on. Frankie sits as Scrap opens the burger.

SCRAP
You watch the fight?

FRANKIE
Willie did good.

SCRAP
That's what you got to say?

FRANKIE
He won, he did good.

SCRAP
So, you really been working on yourself, opening up. That's some fine work.

FRANKIE
You watch it?

SCRAP
Sure. Got HBO.

FRANKIE
How the hell you afford HBO? How long I been telling you to save your money?

SCRAP
Since I fought Louis Typhoon Johnson at the Stadium Club in Tupelo, Mississippi.

FRANKIE
...That true?

44 CONTINUED: 44

SCRAP
My manager ran off with the purse, left you and me to hitch home, do you remember nothin'?

FRANKIE
Remember walkin' half the damn way. Remember thinkin' I'd be lynched.

SCRAP
Remember you leavin' me with my dick in my hand behind that gas station.

FRANKIE
I got us a ride! Son of a bitch drove off before I even closed the door! Had to jump out and walk two miles back!

SCRAP
Conscience got the better of you.

Silence. Frankie hears a thumping from out in the gym. He gives Scrap a look.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
It's her birthday.

45 INT. HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS 45

Frankie walks toward the dimly lit gym. Sees Maggie, sweat soaked, working the speed bag, making all the same mistakes and punishing herself for it. Frankie watches, unseen. She stops, breathing heavy. Frankie steps out into the light.

FRANKIE
You're not breathing right. It's why you're pantin'.

She hides a flash of pain, something very deep.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
It's your birthday, huh? That makes you how old?

MAGGIE
I am thirty-three, Mr. Dunn. And I'm here celebrating the fact that I spent another year scrapin' dishes and waitressin', which is what I been doing since thirteen.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: 45

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
And according to you, I'll be thirty seven before I can even throw a decent punch - which, after working this speed bag for a month and gettin' nowhere, I now realize may be God's simple truth. Other truth is, my brother's in prison, my sister cheats on welfare by pretendin' one of her babies is still alive, my daddy's dead and my momma weighs three hundred and twelve pounds. And if I was thinking straight I'd go back home, find a used trailer, buy a deep fryer and some Oreos. Problem is this is the only thing I ever felt good doin'. If I'm too old for this, then I got nothing else. That nuff truth to suit you?

She doesn't take her eyes off him, demanding an answer.

FRANKIE
...That your speed bag?

MAGGIE
Put yours behind the counter. Wish I could say I wore it out.

FRANKIE
Okay. I'll show you this, but that's it. Then you get a trainer.

MAGGIE
No, sorry.

FRANKIE
...You're in a position to negotiate?

MAGGIE
Yes sir, because I know if you train me right, I'm gonna be a champ. I seen you looking at me--

FRANKIE
--Outta pity.

MAGGIE
Don't you say that! Don't you say that if it ain't true! I want a trainer.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (2) 45

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Don't want charity, don't want favors. If you're not interested, I got more celebrating to do.

She goes back to punishing the bag. Frankie can't stand to watch her.

FRANKIE
Stop, stop, stop. What the hell you doing?
(she stops)
Okay, here it is: if I take you on--

MAGGIE
--You won't never regret it.

FRANKIE
--Just listen. If I take you on--

MAGGIE
--I promise I'll work so hard.

FRANKIE
God, this is already a mistake.

MAGGIE
--I'm listening, boss.

FRANKIE
If I take you on, you do everything I say.
(as she opens her mouth)
You don't question me, you don't ask me why, you don't say nothing 'xcept "yes, Frankie." I'm gonna try and forget you're a girl--

MAGGIE
--It's all I ask.

FRANKIE
so, don't come crying to me if you get hurt.

MAGGIE
We got a deal.

FRANKIE
No. Understand this.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (3) 45

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
I'll teach you to fight, but that's it. After that you find yourself a manager and I say good-bye.

MAGGIE
Don't mean to argue but--

FRANKIE
No arguing. I teach you what you need and it's over. You go off, make a million, I don't care; get your teeth knocked out, I don't care. And I don't want to hear about it either way. Only way I'll do this thing.

She sees he can't go over this line. She shakes his hand.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Now move your feet, stand like a person whose gonna hit something.

MAGGIE
Move em how boss?

He moves them for her.

FRANKIE
Hit the bag.

She nails it once.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Stop!

MAGGIE
What'd I do wrong?

FRANKIE
Two things, first you asked me a question, then you asked another one. Step aside.
(he takes the stance)
It's not about hitting hard, it s about hitting right.

He demonstrates, one step at a time.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Count with me. I drive my left fist straight through on one.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (4) 45

MAGGIE
Can you show me that again?

FRANKIE
Say one.

MAGGIE
One.

FRANKIE
One one, my weight is on my right foot, see?

SCRAP

watches from the shadows of the back hall.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Then I rock over and put weight on my left foot and leave it there while on *two* I punch the bag--

And we start a montage of Frankie training her.

46 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT 46

Maggie sits at her table in front of two small piles of cash. She finishes writing a letter and stuffs one of the piles of cash into it, seals it...

FRANKIE (V.O.)
--with the butt of my left fist like I was stickin' it with an ice pick from the side.

...and addresses the envelope to "Mrs. Earline Fitzgerald."

47 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 47

Maggie watches Frankie intently.

FRANKIE (V.O.)
While my weight's on my left foot, I drive through the bag on three.

48 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- NIGHT 48

Maggie takes a big order.

FRANKIE (V.O.)
Now I drop my weight back over to my right foot again...

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: 48

CLOSE ON HER FEET

She rocks back on her right while standing there.

49 BACK TO THE GYM - ANOTHER DAY 49

Shawrelle tries to pretend he isn't watching Frankie, isn't trying to pick something up.

FRANKIE
And on *four* I do the ice-pick move with my right. You do it.

Frankie steps away, Maggie tries her very best, which is pretty god awful. Frankie watches for as long as he can.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Just keep doin' it.

He walks away to let her work. In a series of TIME CUTS we see Maggie getting better as the days pass, until that bag swings sweet and fast in a perfect figure eight.

DANGER mimics.

SCRAP can't take his eyes off her.

SHAWRELLE scoffs, goes back to sparring with Omar.

FRANKIE sneaks a peek up from his book.

MAGGIE finally stops, sweating, hands on her knees and breathing hard. She looks up to see Frankie coming.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Rest when you're dead.

He snatches up the punch mitts and walks off. She straightens up and follows him.

SCRAP V.O.
To make a fighter, you gotta strip 'em down to bare wood.

50 FRANKIE 50

wears the punch mitts, lets her hammer away at them.

50 CONTINUED: 50

FRANKIE
Jab, jab, double up. Do it again. Two of them. One-two. One-two hook. Two jabs, right-hand, jab, jab, double up, jab, hook, come back with the right hand. Do it again. Do it again.

SCRAP V.O.
You can't just tell em 'forget everything you know', you gotta make em forget it in their bones; make em so tired they only listen to you, only hear your voice, only do what you say, and nothing else. You show em how to stand...

51 FRANKIE - ANOTHER DAY 51

He grabs her calves, pulls them closer together.

SCRAP V.O.
Keep their legs under their shoulders...

52 FRANKIE -- ANOTHER DAY 52

Does it again.

SCRAP V.O.
Show em how to keep their balance...

53 FRANKIE & MAGGIE -- ANOTHER DAY 53

Frankie works her in the ring. He keeps touching her on the shoulder, a one fingered jab.

FRANKIE
See how you blink when I touch you. If I'm touching you, I'm turning you. If I'm turning you, I'm taking your balance. Do it.
(she tries)
You take my balance, you take my fight.

SCRAP V.O.
...and take it away from the other guy.

Sally Mendoza watches Maggie. Frankie notices him watching.

54 IN THE RING - ANOTHER DAY 54

Frankie shows Maggie how to:

SCRAP V.O.
They gotta know how to cut off the ring.

55 ON THE FLOOR 55

She mimics Frankie's balance work...

SCRAP V.O.
How to generate momentum off your right toe and

56 BACK AT THE PUNCH MITTS 56

Maggie slams them with much more power and certainty.

SCRAP V.O.
how to flex your knee when you fire a jab.

MAGGIE
Think I'm ready for a fight, boss?

He ignores her.

57 BACK IN THE RING -- ANOTHER DAY 57

Shows her...

SCRAP V.O.
How to fight backing up, so the other guy doesn't wanna come after ya. And then you gotta show em all again.

58 FRANKIE - AT THE HEAVY BAG 58

Grabs her ankles, pulls them closer together.

SCRAP V.O.
Over and over and over.

Jump cuts as he does this three more times.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Till they think they were born that way.

59 INT. HIT PIT -- ANOTHER DAY 59

Maggie spars with a muscular Hispanic woman. Scrap takes a fifty cent tip from a black fighter for doing some errand.

SCRAP
Do appreciate it.

59 CONTINUED: 59

He looks up at the ring, admiring Maggie. She is all lean muscle now, but her face is beet red. Frankie calls from the bleachers, waves her down.

FRANKIE
You're not breathing.

MAGGIE
(panting)
Hate to disagree with you.

FRANKIE
You're holding your breath when you punch. You get under pressure, you hold your breath. Stop doing that.

Maggie sits beside him on the bleacher.

MAGGIE
Okay. But other than that, I'm doing pretty good, right? I mean, for a girl.

FRANKIE
Wouldn't know, don't train girls.

MAGGIE
You think I might be ready for a fight, boss?

FRANKIE
Find a manager, ask him.

MAGGIE
Like to, but you been keepin' me too busy.
(beat)
You got any family, boss?

Scrap looks over, knows she's on dangerous ground.

FRANKIE
Why?

MAGGIE
You just spending all this time with me. Didn't know if you had any family.

Scrap tries to pretend he's working and not listening.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: (2) 59

FRANKIE
No. Got a daughter. Katy.

MAGGIE
That's family.

FRANKIE
We ain't really close.

MAGGIE
How much she weigh?

FRANKIE
What?

MAGGIE
Trouble in my family comes by the pound.

FRANKIE
She ain't that big. Good athlete. Don't know if she kept it up.

Frankie disappears into a hole he thought he stepped over. Maggie senses this, decides to pull him back out.

MAGGIE
So, what do you think? I ready for a fight?

Frankie looks up. Something's changed in his face, but she doesn't know what. Frankie looks around, spots Sally Mendoza.

FRANKIE
Sally, come 'ere.

Scrap sees what's happening, tries to cut it off.

SCRAP
Frankie? Got a problem in back. Can I see you about it?

FRANKIE
(to Maggie)
Sally here's a good manager. Got two boys Golden Gloves.
(to Sally)
You looking for a girl?

SALLY
Lookin' for a good one.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: (3) 59

FRANKIE
Then here you go.
(to Maggie)
Good working with ya, girlie.

Maggie tries to keep her face from falling to the floor as she watches Frankie walk.

SALLY
I wasn't lyin', I been watching you work, you gotta a hell of a right.

MAGGIE
Thank you.

Frankie gets over to Scrap.

FRANKIE
What's this big problem?

SCRAP
No problem. No problem at all.

Frankie walks back to his office.

MAGGIE

eyes him all the way, barely listening to Sally.

SALLY
You want to give this a try, see if it's a fit?

Maggie meets Scrap's eyes, he gives her a little smile.

MAGGIE
Yeah, sure.

SALLY
Good, cause I think you're ready for a fight.

With the sound of a bell we're in...

60 INT. CLUB RING -- NIGHT 60

Some club, someplace, who cares. What we care about is Maggie, sitting on her stool, bloodied and beaten and confused. Her eyes dart to Sally, who mops her up.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: 60

MAGGIE
What am I doin' wrong, Sally? Every time I get inside she's on me.

SALLY
You're doing great, you're wearing her down, just keep punching.

MAGGIE
I'm not doing great, I'm losin'.

SALLY
You're wearing her down.

Sally climbs out. The bell rings again and Maggie goes after her opponent, and immediately starts taking more punishment.

FRANKIE

stands in the shadows against the back wall, his hand covering most of his face. Scrap joins him.

SCRAP
Nice night, ain't it?

Maggie drops her left and is punished for it. Frankie winces.

FRANKIE
Jesus Christ.

SCRAP
That's Lonnie Washington's girl, she a hell of a fighter. Eleven and 0. Lonnie got some good fighters. He got Joey Adagio, lightweight champ.

FRANKIE
Keep your left up!

SCRAP
Wouldn't be my choice for a first fight. But Sally's a good manager, must think she can take her.

Maggie's opponent comes over her left again.

FRANKIE
Jesus H--Keep your left up! Your left!

60 CONTINUED: (2) 60

SCRAP
Think she can hear you from back here?

FRANKIE
Your left!

Maggie gets inside on sheer guts, goes to town on the girl's torso. The girl pushes her back and comes over Maggie's lazy left, catching her hard.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Jesus!

SCRAP
Course, Maggie loses, it don't mean much to Sally. Might even help him. Lonnie's girl gets another win, maybe Lonnie let Sally's lightweight fight Joey Adagio for the title.

FRANKIE
Sally's trying to set a fight with Adagio?

SCRAP
What do I know? I just comes cause I enjoy the fights.

Maggie drops her left again and pays the price.

FRANKIE
Mother of God--

The bell rings and Frankie springs cff the back wall. He's ringside before the fighters even get to their corners, calling up through the ropes.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
C'mere-c'mere!

Maggie goes to him, squatting. Sally is in the ring with the stool in his hand...

SALLY
(to Maggie)
Hey! Get over here!

FRANKIE
You're dropping your left hand!

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (3) 60

SALLY
Frankie, you mind if I talk to my fuckin' fighter?

FRANKIE
You're doing a hell of a job with her there, Sally. You give the same advice to your lightweight?

REF
Dunn, what the hell you doin'?

FRANKIE
Talkin', what are you doin'?

REF
This your fighter?

SALLY
It's my fighter.

MAGGIE
(to Sally)
It ain't fittin' real well, Sally.

SALLY
Fine! You take her! Can't fight worth a shit anyway.

Sally climbs out of the ring.

REF
Somebody tell me what's going on!

FRANKIE
I was late, Sally was just workin' till I got here.

REF
You're telling me this is your fighter??

FRANKIE
Yeah, this is my fighter.

Maggie's eyes almost tear up. The ref walks off with:

REF
Then you got ten seconds!

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (4) 60

MAGGIE
I keep holding my left up, boss, then I throw a punch and it keeps droppin'.

FRANKIE
So, leave it down.

MAGGIE
That'd be a lot easier.

FRANKIE
She thinks she knows ya, keeps comin' over that left, she ain't lookin' anywhere else. You let it drop and watch for her cocking that big right of hers, hear me?

MAGGIE
I hear you, boss.

SCRAP
(snatching it)
Got the stool!

The bell sounds. Maggie stands, Frankie grabs her wrist pulls her back to the ropes.

FRANKIE
She cocks the right, take a short step back and fire a good night hook. You got one in you?

MAGGIE
Got it right here.

REF
Fight or I'm calling it!

FRANKIE
Then go give it to her.

The fighters circle, trading jabs. Scrap steps up to Frankie carrying the stool.

SCRAP
Want the stool?

FRANKIE
It's the fourth round of a four-rounder.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (5) 60

Maggie throws a couple jabs. Her opponent watches, waiting for the left to drop. Maggie jabs again.

SCRAP V.O.
The body knows what fighters don't: how to protect itself. A neck can only twist so far. Twist it just a hair more and the body says 'I'll take it from here, cause you obviously don't know what you're doing'

Maggie pulls a jab back, lets her left drop. Watches. Sees that right shoulder cock. As the punch comes Maggie drops back unharmed and unpacks a powerful hook. It snaps her opponent's head hard to the right, making her body go limp...

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
'Lie down now, rest and we'll talk about this when you regain your senses.'

...and she finds comfort on the canvass.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
It's called the knockout mechanism.

SCRAP
(to Frankie)
See the way she do that? Sugar Ray'd do that. Girl's got sugar.

61 INT. CLUB DRESSING ROOM 61

Frankie's pumping water into his dehydrated fighter.

FRANKIE
You forgot the rule. What's the rule?

MAGGIE
Keep my left up?

FRANKIE
Protect yourself at all times. It's a rule. What's the rule?

MAGGIE
Protect myself at all times.
(beat)
You gave me away. How was that protecting me?

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: 61

FRANKIE
...Wasn't

MAGGIE
...S'Okay.
(beat)
I'm gonna work on my left, boss.

FRANKIE
Drink your water.

MAGGIE
Other than that, how'd I do?

FRANKIE
You did fine.

MAGGIE
...You gonna leave me again?

FRANKIE
Never.
(beat)
That place you work, they have lemon pie?

MAGGIE
Sure.

FRANKIE
They use that canned filling crap?

MAGGIE
Big can, yea size. Says "Homemade" on the label.

Frankie offers a crack of a smile.

FRANKIE
Take the weekend off.

MAGGIE
It's only Thursday, boss.

FRANKIE
You arguing with me?

MAGGIE
Know better than to do that, boss.

61 CONTINUED: (2) 61

SCRAP V.O.
All fighters are pig headed some way or other.

62 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- EARLY MORNING 62

Father Horvath waits at the door.

SCRAP V.O.
Some part of them always thinks they know better than you about somethin'.

Frankie is last out.

FRANKIE
Can you spare two minutes for the Immaculate Conception?

The priest responds by going inside and locking the door.

63 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- EARLY MORNING 63

She's sitting at her table, reading a letter. We scan the words: *...need more money...*

SCRAP V.O.
Truth is, even if they're wrong, even if that one thing is gonna be the ruin of them...

Maggie takes the bills out of her tip jar and folds it into a letter.

64 INT. THE HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS 64

As Frankie comes down the stairs, passing fighters waiting for trainers.

SCRAP V.O.
if you can beat that last bit out of them, then they ain't fighters at all.

Frankie turns the corner, sees Maggie working the heavy bag, sweating like she's been at it since dawn.

FRANKIE
Said I see you Monday.

MAGGIE
You sure did, boss.

64 CONTINUED: 64

FRANKIE
That was last night.

MAGGIE
You asked me not to argue with you.

Frankie walks away.

65 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER 65

Scrap sits, his feet up, watching Maggie work herself down to the bone. Frankie stands propped against the desk, staring alongside him.

FRANKIE
Woman won't do a damn thing I tell her.

SCRAP
You want my advice?

FRANKIE
Why ain't you wearing shoes?

SCRAP
Airing out my feet.

FRANKIE
You got big holes in your socks.

SCRAP
Not that big.

FRANKIE
I thought I gave you money to buy new ones.

SCRAP
These are my sleeping socks. My feet like a little air at night.

FRANKIE
So, why you wearing them in the daytime?

SCRAP
Daytime socks got too many holes.

FRANKIE
If I give you more money, will you buy socks?

65 CONTINUED: 65

SCRAP
I'd be tempted ta. But it might makes it way to the track. Couldn't say for sure.

And they just keep staring at Maggie, she is a marvel.

66 INT. SOME CLUB - SOME PLACE -- NIGHT 66

As Maggie KO's her next opponent.

SCRAP V.O.
Didn't take Maggie long to hit her stride.

67 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 67

Maggie knocks the next one to the mat. Girl bounces back up, Maggie puts her down again.

68 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 68

This girl goes down just as fast and hard.

69 INT. CLUB DRESSING ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT 69

Frankie unlaces Maggie's gloves.

MAGGIE
Got the breathing thing down.

FRANKIE
You ain't holding your breath cause you're not in the ring long enough. You gotta quit knocking out these girls in the first round.

MAGGIE
Thought that was the point, boss.

FRANKIE
Point is for you to get good, and to get good you need fights; and I won't be able to get you any if you keep knocking them out in the first round. Nobody wants to see their fighter embarrassed.

MAGGIE
Why am I still doing four-rounders, boss?

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: 69

FRANKIE
Because you ain't got the lungs to go six-rounds yet.

MAGGIE
I do if I keep knocking em out in the first round.

He gives her a look. She gives him an impish smile.

70 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 70

The bell rings, a tough looking girl comes out of the corner, heading for Maggie.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie made her fight one more four-rounder, just to let her know who was boss.

Maggie fakes a left hook and the girl steps into Maggie's vicious right haymaker. The girl hits the mat.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Maggie left no doubt about it.

Maggie heads back to her corner with a shrug for Frankie.

MAGGIE
Sorry, boss.

71 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 71

Maggie faces a muscular Hispanic girl, who is dishing it out as good as she gets.

SCRAP V.O.
Her first six rounder didn't go quite as smooth.

Maggie catches her under the jaw and finishes her off.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Maggie didn't knock her out till the <u>end</u> of the first round.

As the girl is counted out:

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
After that, no manager wanted to put his fighter in with Maggie.

72 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY 72

Frankie hands an envelope full of cash to the manager sitting across from him. The manager counts it.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie had to go into his pocket to get her decent fights, sweetening the purse by paying managers on the side.

Frankie does the same again, this time it's another manager. Then a third.

73 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY 73

Frankie's sitting at the desk, but nobody's sitting across from him.

SCRAP V.O.
That only worked for so long. Then Frankie did something he hated doing. He took a chance.

74 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 74

SLOW MOTION. A deadly looking BLACK GIRL in dredlocks stares right into Maggie's soul.

SCRAP V.O.
And moved her up in class.

Maggie jabs, snaps her left back. Jab, jab, snaps her left back; not high enough.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
That coulda been a mistake.

Dredlocks comes over Maggie's left and hits her with a lead weight right. And everything goes QUIET as Maggie's nose BREAKS. Maggie dances back, shakes it off as best she can, but the blood is pouring. And the bell rings.

Maggie drops onto her stool. Frankie is in the ring in a flash, fending off the RING DOCTOR who wants a look.

FRANKIE
Gimme two goddamn seconds!
(MORE)

He moves off as Frankie goes to work on Maggie. The nose is spread across her face; just touching it makes her wince.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: 74

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
It's broke.

MAGGIE
Dang!

Maggie is at the point of tears, but not from the pain.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Fix it.

FRANKIE
Can't. It's broken, no way to stop the blood.

MAGGIE
You can fix it.

FRANKIE
I can't. I have to call it.

MAGGIE
I seen what you can do! Fix it!

FRANKIE
I can crack it back in place, but I can't stop the bleeding. Ring doctor's gonna call it.

She stops shouting and digs down deep into some pain we can only glimpse.

MAGGIE
Please, Frankie. If you can stop the blood I can beat her.

Everything in Frankie says don't do this. But he shoves a rag into her mouth, takes her nose between his thumb and forefinger and cracks it back into place. Maggie almost bites through that rag before he yanks it back out. Frankie tries not to look into her eyes as he cleans out the blood and packs adrenaline rich salve up her nose.

FRANKIE
Inhale.

MAGGIE
What?

FRANKIE
Inhale!

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: (2) 74

MAGGIE
What?

FRANKIE
Breathe in!

She does. SILENCE as Maggie sucks the adrenaline deep into her nasal cavity. By the time the sounds of the ring SWELL BACK IN she's missed half of what Frankie's saying:

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
-- about twenty seconds before that turns into a geyser and you'll be spraying blood all over the front row. Twenty seconds, that's all you got.

The ring doctor is there, does a quick check.

RING DOCTOR
Okay!

Frankie gives Maggie one last deep look and climbs out. The bell RINGS and everything goes SILENT again -- except for the THROBBING in Maggie's ears. She strides out of her corner, fire in her eyes. Her opponent throws everything she's got. Maggie ducks and cripples the girl with two blows to the solar plexus.

The girl pulls her arms down to protect her gut and Maggie hammers her in the temple. She clutches.

Maggie shoves her away and delivers a lightning combination that puts her out. The girl falls in SLOW MOTION, Maggie turns to look for Frankie. She doesn't hear him whisper:

FRANKIE
Mo cuishle.

75 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM -- NIGHT 75

Packed. Maggie has her head back, cotton in her nose, an ice-pack on her face. Scrap sits between her and Frankie, who pretends to read his book. Maggie looks to Frankie:

MAGGIE
(unintelligible)
Whatcha readin'?

FRANKIE
(to Scrap)
What the hell she say?

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: 75

SCRAP
Wants to know what you're reading.

FRANKIE
Yeats; keep your head back.

SCRAP
Talk a little Yeats to her, show her what a treat that is.

FRANKIE
When the hell they gonna get to her?

MAGGIE
(almost unintelligible)
I'm okay, Frankie.

FRANKIE
What'd you learn tonight?

MAGGIE
(lifts ice pack)
Always protect myself.

FRANKIE
That's the rule. What's the rule?

MAGGIE
Always protect myself.

A nurse steps into the room with a clipboard.

NURSE
Margaret Fitzgerald?

Frankie steers Maggie over to the nurse, who walks her off.

FRANKIE
I'll be right here.

Frankie sits again.

SCRAP
How ya doing?

FRANKIE
I'm not the one hurt.

SCRAP
Broken nose don't hurt that much.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (2) 75

FRANKIE
Why you telling me?

SCRAP
No reason.

SCRAP V.O.
But some wounds are too deep or too close to the bone.

76 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- MORNING 76

Frankie comes out. His head's somewhere else.

FATHER HORVATH
(calls after him)
Did you write your daughter?

FRANKIE
Every week.

FATHER HORVATH
I have no idea why you come to church.

And Frankie walks off.

77 INT. FRANKIE'S KITCHEN -- DAY 77

Frankie sits, pen poised over a blank sheet of paper. He puts it down and rubs his eyes.

SCRAP V.O.
And no matter how hard you work it, you just can't stop the bleeding.

78 INT. A RING SOMEWHERE -- NIGHT 78

SCRAP V.O.
Maggie's next two fights were easy.

Maggie flattens an opponent...

79 INT. ANOTHER RING -- ANOTHER NIGHT 79

Knocks down a second.

SCRAP V.O.
Maybe too easy.
(MORE)

Maggie turns to Frankie, not as happy as she should be about the win.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED: 79

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
After her twelfth straight knock out, Frankie got a couple real good offers. The first was to fight--

80 INT. RING IN A LARGE VENUE - GERMANY -- DAY 80

BILLIE THE BLUE BEAR, a big-busted, masculine looking Russian, pants in her corner between rounds.

SCRAP V.O.
--Billy "the Blue Bear" Astrakhov for the WBA Welterweight Title. Billie was a former prostitute,

Billie comes out of the corner breathing fire.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
--a banger who waded in winging shots from all angles, easily beating girls from Berlin to Australia. Had a reputation for being the dirtiest fighter in the ranks.

Billie jams the palm of her glove into her opponent's nose. The nose breaks instantly and the girl hits the mat.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Didn't seem to matter to her that something like that could kill a person.

The crowd goes nuts.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
And the crowds loved her. Especially in Germany.

81 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT 81

Frankie hangs up the phone.

SCRAP V.O.
He turned it down without even telling her.

82 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 82

Frankie's heading out. Scrap hands him the counter phone. Frankie talks, under:

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED: 82

SCRAP V.O.
The next was to fight the British champ, a Jamaican girl Billie just beat.

Frankie hangs up.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
He turned that down, too.

83 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- DAY 83

Maggie pours Frankie a half a cup of coffee.

MAGGIE
That's a lotta money, boss.

FRANKIE
You're making money. Why you still working here?

She fills the remaining half with cream.

MAGGIE
It's a title match, right?

FRANKIE
You British? Then you can't take her title away; she got nothing to lose, you got nothing to win.

MAGGIE
Might still be a good fight.

FRANKIE
I just moved you up to welterweight. Not good enough for you to fight contenders, you have to fight some bullshit champ?

MAGGIE
Didn't notice I was fighting contenders.

FRANKIE
I can find you another manager any time you like.
(MORE)

That stings. Frankie knows it was a shitty thing to say. So, he has to make it worse.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED: 83

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Maybe you learn to protect your face, I wouldn't have to turn down all that money.

MAGGIE
My face out there so much, it's a miracle I ain't been knocked out yet, boss.

She walks off to serve someone else, leaving Frankie to stew.

84 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT 84

Almost all the lights are off. Close on MAGGIE'S HANDS, as she winds adhesive tape around her left wrist, then lifts the roll over her shoulder and sticks the tape to the skin on the back of her neck. She pulls it down over the other side and winds it around her left wrist again, so that her glove is held up in front of her face. She pulls her right glove on with her teeth and steps out of shot. THUD. THUD.

MAGGIE

bangs away at the heavy bag with her right. CUT. She's covered in sweat and still pounding, circling. CUT. Her shirt is drenched, her left is throbbing, her right hurts every time it smacks the bag. She keeps hitting it harder.

SCRAP

watches from the shadows of the back hall.

SCRAP
You can't work here no more tonight.

She stops, shakes off her glove, unwinds the tape and strips it off the back of her neck, taking hair and skin with it. She drops her stuff in her fight bag.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
I got us a reservation.

Maggie looks up at him, not expecting this.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
You may want to shower.

85 INT. BROADWAY DINER -- LATER THAT NIGHT 85

Hair wet, Maggie sits at the counter with Scrap near the back of the restaurant.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: 85

The waiter puts a cupcake down, a candle burning atop. She stares at it, thinking.

SCRAP
Ain't no big secret what you're wishing for, go ahead and blow.

She does, takes a knife, cuts it in two. Scrap bites in.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
Thirty-three ain't so old. I was still fighting when I was thirty-nine. Fought twenty-three years.

The door opens, Scrap turns to see Mickey Mack, dressed like he's been out on the town.

MICKEY MACK
How ya doing, Scrap?

SCRAP
Doing good, Mickey.

Mickey takes a seat at the far end of the counter. Scrap looks to Maggie.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
You two ain't talking?

MAGGIE
Don't hardly know him.

SCRAP
Met Frankie just after my thirty-seventh birthday. He was picking up jobs as a cut man. He'd patch me up when I thought it was impossible. Good man to have in your corner.

MAGGIE
Yes, he is.

SCRAP
Stayed with me through my last fight, in San Berdoo. My manager was off gettin' drunk, so it was just Frankie and me, and I was takin' a mean beatin'. Everybody got a particular number of fights in them, but nobody tells you what that number is. Mine was a hundred and nine.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (2) 85

SCRAP (CONT'D)
I just refused to believe it. Fourth round, this cut opens up.
(points to a scar over his blind eye)
Blood starts pouring into my eye. They shoulda stopped the fight, but I was a black man in San Berdoo, blood was what I was there for. So, round after round I get Frankie to patch me up, and he keeps saying he's gonna throw in the towel; but he ain't my manager, he can't throw in nothin'. Round after round, he's arguing with me and I'm damn near laughin', cause it's tearin' him up more than me.
(beat)
I go fifteen rounds, lose by decision. Lose my eye the next morning.
(beat)
In twenty-three years, he's never said a word about it. Doesn't have to, I see it every time he looks at me. Somehow Frankie thinks he shoulda stopped that fight. Shoulda saved my eye. Lives every day wishing he coulda take back that 109th fight. I wanted to go to 110. Still do.
(beat)
Man loves fighters more than he loves the fight. And we love him back. But...if you wanna get to the title, maybe he ain't the guy to take you there.

Maggie's stunned, never expected to hear this from Scrap. He counts out his coins and places them on the bill.

MAGGIE
You tell Mr. Mack we d be here tonight?

SCRAP
You finish your cupcake.

And he walks out. She watches him all the way to the door.

SCRAP V.O.
It's the rule. Always protect yourself.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (3) 85

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
People never take their own advice. If she was gonna leave Frankie, better she did it to him then.

The door closes behind Scrap. Maggie looks to Mickey Mack. She stands and walks to him.

MAGGIE
Mr. Mickey Mack? I'm Maggie Fitzgerald.

She holds out her hand, he takes it, swallowing his food.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I hear you're a real good manager, doing good things for Big Willie. But I thought you should know that I ain't ever leaving Mr. Dunn, so you don't have to make any more excuses to bump into me. Sorry for interrupting your dinner.

And she walks out.

SCRAP V.O.
Maggie always did like taking them out in the first round.

And the door closes and Mickey Mack has to laugh.

86 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- NIGHT 86

Frankie unlocks his door, picks up the mail that's been dropped through the slot. He leafs through them as he walks into his kitchen. One of them makes him stop.

87 INT. FRANKIE'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER 87

Frankie opens a shoebox. It's full of identical unopened letters. He places this letter in the box, puts the box on the high shelf in his closet, alongside several similar boxes, and closes the closet door.

He sits on his bed and tries to not think. And fails. And for a first time we glimpse the crack in his soul.

88 EXT. VENICE NEIGHBORHOOD -- EARLY MORNING 88

Frankie sits in his Plymouth outside of Maggie's building, wearing yesterday's suit. He checks his watch.

89 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER 89

Frankie inspects the place. He hates it.

FRANKIE
What the hell you be doing with your money?

MAGGIE
Saving it.

She disappears into the bathroom to fill up the kettle.

FRANKIE
Good girl.

Frankie ambles over to the bureau, where Maggie's checkbook lies beside her tip jar. He fingers it as he talks.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
When you save enough, you need to buy yourself a little house. Cash, no mortgage.

He sees the entries -- most made out to Earline Fitzgerald.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
Gonna be a while before I can do that.

FRANKIE
May be a stretch at first, but you need a place that's yours. You put it off, buy stuff that don't mean anything, what have you got?

She comes back with the kettle, puts it on the hot plate.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Wait too long, you end up with nothing.

MAGGIE
Okay. Soon as I get the money.

FRANKIE
Made a lot of mistakes in my life. Just trying to keep you from doing the same.

MAGGIE
I know, boss.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: 89

FRANKIE
Well, I'm not gonna live forever.

Hands her the video tape he's been holding.

MAGGIE
What is it?

FRANKIE
Tape of the girl you're fighting in England. You gonna get the title, we better start making some moves.

She leaps into his arms, legs around his waist.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Jesus! Get the hell off me! You know how old I am?

MAGGIE
Thank you, boss. Thank you so much.

FRANKIE
Just put the damn tape in.

MAGGIE
Put it where, boss?

Frankie looks around the room. No TV. Damn.

90 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- DAY 90

Frankie and Maggie watch the tape. The Jamaican girl, young, strong and assured, trades blows with a Yugoslav who looks twice her size.

MAGGIE
How old is she?

FRANKIE
Twenty-two.

MAGGIE
Twenty-two? When she get to be champ?

FRANKIE
You'll ask her when she's on the mat. The other girl's a heavyweight. It's an exhibition, charity thing.

And with that, the Jamaican knocks the Yugoslav cold dead out. The tape stops. Maggie doesn't speak for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED: 90

MAGGIE
She's a good fighter.

FRANKIE
Yep.

MAGGIE
Think I woulda been that good at her age?

FRANKIE
Think you're that good now.

MAGGIE
Maybe I missed it, Frankie. Maybe you were right. Maybe I am too old.

FRANKIE
You could be.
(standing)
Which woulda been a real waste of my time.

He disappears into the kitchen.

91 INT. AN ANCIENT SPORTING GOODS STORE -- DAY 91

Frankie stands across the counter from a man ten years older than him, a catalogue open between them.

FRANKIE
M O - C U I S H L E. How much that gonna be?

PROPRIETOR
Two hundred and eight bucks.

FRANKIE
You gotta be kidding.

PROPRIETOR
Silk.

Frankie digs into his wallet.

FRANKIE
Fine.
(pays it. A thought)
How much extra for a harp?

PROPRIETOR
Seventy-five dollars.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: 91

Frankie makes the decision, each bill he counts out causing him great pain.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)
You want real gold thread?

Frankie looks up, knowing what's coming. Waits for it.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)
Forty dollars.

Frankie stares right through the back of his head. Then reaches into his wallet.

92 INT. A CAVERNOUS DRESSING ROOM - LONDON -- NIGHT 92

The place is so large that it dwarfs Frankie and Maggie. He tapes her second hand, Maggie tests it. A PAKISTANI man with Cockney accent peeks in through the door:

PAKISTANI
Ten minutes, luv.

MAGGIE
Thank you.
(to Frankie)
Man says he loves me.

FRANKIE
I'm sure he's not the first.

MAGGIE
First since my daddy. I win, you think he'll propose?

FRANKIE
You win, I'll propose.

It was a joke, something said off the cuff, but suddenly Frankie feels embarrassed. Maggie senses it, is charmed. Frankie snatches a box out of the bag on the floor.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Hurry up and put this on.

She looks at him, curious, then tears it open to find a Kelly green silk robe. She turns it over, sees a golden Gaelic harp and the words **Mo Cuishle** emblazoned in Celtic lettering.

MAGGIE
I think they gave you somebody else's.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED: 92

FRANKIE
It's yours.

MAGGIE
What's it mean?

FRANKIE
Nothin', it's Gaelic. Go fight.

She decides to leave it at that. She flicks it open and as it unfurls...

93 INT. LONDON ARENA -- NIGHT 93

Frankie walks Maggie toward the ring. A couple of young Irish men on the aisle take notice of her robe. One whispers to the other.

SCRAP V.O.
She wasn't the main attraction.

A red-headed woman notices the robe and says something to the man beside her.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
She was on the undercard of a middleweight title fight.

94 BAM! 94

The tough JAMAICAN punches Maggie like a speeding train. Her fists fly so fast Maggie can barely block the punches.

SCRAP V.O.
But ask someone who was there, they couldn't tell you who else fought that night.

Maggie dances away, overwhelmed, trying to figure out how to fight this girl. Frankie yells from the corner. The Jamaican charges and smothers Maggie in punches. Maggie blocks and dances away; she can't get a punch off. The bell.

MAGGIE

hits the stool.

MAGGIE
Dang, she's tough. I can't get inside. I can't get close enough to hit her.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED: 94

FRANKIE
You know why that is?

MAGGIE
What, boss?

FRANKIE
She's a better fighter than you.
She's younger, she's stronger and
she's got more experience.
(off Maggie's reaction)
Now what are you gonna do about it?

95 SLAM 95

back into the ring. The Jamaican charges. Maggie sidesteps and counterpunches, landing a stunning combination to the torso. A lone cheer comes up from the crowd:

IRISH MAN
Mo Cuishle!!

The Jamaican comes back with amazing speed. Maggie blocks and counters, rocking her back with an uppercut to the jaw.

SECOND IRISH MAN
Mo Cuishle!!

NOW THREE TOGETHER
Mo Cuishle.!! Mo Cuishle!!

Maggie looks around, confused by the shouting. With her guard down, the Jamaican connects. Maggie beats back the attack. Several more people take up the chant.

IRISH FANS
Mo Cuishle!! Mo Cuishle!!

The bell.

MAGGIE

bangs her butt down onto the seat. Frankie pumps water into her. The Irish fans are still CHANTING.

MAGGIE
What the hell did you write on me?

FRANKIE
Worry about the fight.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED: 95

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
She's throwing too many punches, trying to take you out early. For once in your life don't play that game. She's gonna wind down like a toy. You wait for it, then take her down.

MAGGIE
You're not gonna tell me what it means, are you?

FRANKIE
Wish I knew.

Frankie grabs the stool and climbs out. The bell sounds and the Jamaican rushes, throwing punches so fast she looks like she has four arms. Maggie blocks, then counters with a flurry of her own. The Irish crowd goes wild and now almost all of them are chanting:

IRISH FANS
Mo Cuishle!! Mo Cuishle!! Mo Cuishle!! Mo Cuishle!!

The Jamaican staggers, Maggie presses, unleashing a gorgeous combination, ending in a hook that spins the Jamaican on her heels and drops her to the mat. The Irish fans go wild! Maggie dances back to the corner as the ref counts the Jamaican out.

Frankie grins, shakes his head. He calls up to her, but she can't hear him over the yelling and the chanting.

96 INT. CAVERNOUS DRESSING ROOM - LONDON ARENA -- NIGHT 96

The sudden silence is shocking. Frankie pulls off her gloves. The robe's over her shoulders. She keeps her eyes on him.

MAGGIE
I could ask someone, you know.

FRANKIE
Ask. If you find out, you can tell me, too.

He looks down and keeps unwinding. It's a shame, because he misses Maggie's beautiful smile.

EXTREME WIDE SHOT - SAME

Frankie unwinds the dressing and checks her hands, under:

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: 96

SCRAP V.O.
Whatever it meant, the name stuck. Maggie fought in Edinburgh and Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam; it was always Mo Cuishle. Seems there are Irish people everywhere, or people who wanna be. By the time they came back to the States...

97 INT. CASINO ARENA -- NIGHT 97

Maggie fights a tough Puerto Rican girl.

SCRAP V.O.
Maggie was in a whole new league.

FANS
Macushla! Macushla!

She knocks the girl down with a blow to the temple. The girl hits the mat and grabs her head, writhing in pain. Maggie watches her, dumfounded.

IN THE STANDS

The fans keep cheering 'Macushla', unfazed. The Blue Bear and her manager sit ringside.

SCRAP V.O.
After that they got another offer to fight for the title.

98 INT. CASINO BAR -- NIGHT 98

Frankie stands at the bar with The Blue Bear and her manager.

FRANKIE
What's the split?

BILLIE'S MANAGER
Sixty-forty.

FRANKIE
Good, we take sixty, you take forty, seeing that Maggie is the draw.

BILLIE
(laughs)
That little girl?

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED: 98

FRANKIE
(to Billie)
You think I'm wrong? Really? You think people are saying: "I can't wait to see that scabby Russian dyke fight 'what's-her-name'?" Lotta people in here. Find one that says that and we'll take the forty. Das Vadanya.

And Frankie walks off.

99 INT. CASINO RESTAURANT -- EVENING 99

Frankie drops into the seat across from Maggie.

FRANKIE
They came up to sixty-forty. They'll come back with fifty.

MAGGIE
How's that girl doing?

FRANKIE
Concussion and busted eardrum.

MAGGIE
She be all right?

FRANKIE
What if she ain t?

MAGGIE
Think I could send her somethin'?

FRANKIE
You could give her the purse, probably wouldn't turn it down.

Maggie gets the point. It's a hard game. Frankie looks at his menu. She does the same.

MAGGIE
Boss? That little house we talked about? I bought it.

FRANKIE
Smart girl.

MAGGIE
Bought it for my momma.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED: 99

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Only about a mile from where she lives now. No mortgage, just like you said.

Frankie goes back to the menu.

FRANKIE
You're a good daughter.

MAGGIE
...Mamma don't know about it yet. I was hoping we could stay an extra day, drive over there. I know Momma wants to meet you.

FRANKIE
We could do that.

And he hides his thoughts in the menu.

100 INT. RENTAL CAR - HIGHWAY 160, MISSOURI -- MORNING 100

Frankie and Maggie drive in silence, passing one tiny depressed town after another until they pull into:

101 EXT. TRAILER PARK 101

They pass a line of rusted trailers; kids and dogs everywhere, families sprawled in lawn chairs and watching televisions. They pull to a stop in front of a rusting mobile home.

102 ANGLE ON FRANKIE'S CAR (TIME CUT) 102

The passenger door opens and a gargantuan leg swings out and hits the ground, followed by a second. The back door opens and an equally large leg finds the earth. We move up to see EARLINE and her daughter MARDELL emerge from Frankie's car. Mardell carries a screaming child. Her four-year old boy scrambles out of the back seat as Maggie rises from the other side of the car, her excitement obvious.

EARLINE
This is the Johnson's old house.

MAGGIE
Not anymore.

103 INT. BRICK BUNGALOW -- MOMENTS LATER 103

Maggie opens the door, bursting with pride. The four-year old runs past, Mardell waddles in after her, the baby still

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED: 103

screaming. Earline stops in the doorway, having a hard time understanding what's happening here.

MAGGIE
It's yours Mamma. For you and Mardell and the kids.

Earline enters, taking it all in. Frankie hangs back at what he hopes will be a safe distance.

EARLINE
...Oh, Mary M., you bought this for me?

MAGGIE
All yours, free and clear.

EARLINE
Oh, darlin...

MARDELL
There's no fridge. No stove neither.

MAGGIE
They'll be here fore you move in.

EARLINE
How much money this cost you?

MAGGIE
You never mind that.

EARLINE
You shouldn't have done this.

MAGGIE
You need a decent place.

EARLINE
You shouldn't a done it. She shoulda asked me first.
(off Maggie's look)
Darlin', the government's gonna find out about this house, they're gonna stop my welfare.

MAGGIE
No, they ain't mamma.

EARLINE
Yeah, they are.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED: (2) 103

EARLINE (CONT'D)
You're fine, you're workin', but I can't live without my welfare.

MAGGIE
Momma, I send you money.

EARLINE
What about my medicine? Medicaid gonna cut me off. How am I supposed to get my medicine?

MAGGIE
Mamma, I'll send you more money!

MARDELL
Hope you don't expect J.D. to move in here with us. He's gettin' out, you know.

EARLINE
Why didn't you just give me the money, why did you have to buy a house?

MAGGIE
Didn't have to, Mamma. But it's yours. You want the money, sell it.

And Maggie walks out.

104 EXT. TRAILER PARK -- EVENING 104

Maggie carries Mardell's boy up and puts him down on the porch, tussles his hair before turning away.

EARLINE
I know you didn't mean nothin' hurtful by this. Sometimes you just don't think things through.

MAGGIE
That's true, Mamma.

EARLINE
I'll try to keep the house, I just worry about all those expenses.

MAGGIE
I'll send you some more money.

Earline touches the bruise on Maggie's face.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED: 104

EARLINE
That man hittin' you?

MAGGIE
It's from the fight I'm a fighter, mamma.

EARLINE
(with compassion)
Find a man, Mary M. Live proper. People hear 'bout what you're doing and they laugh. Hurts me to tell you, but they laugh at you.

Off Maggie...

105 EXT. THEODOSIA - SERVICE STATION -- EVENING 105

Frankie fills the tank. He looks up from the pump, sees Maggie sitting in the passenger seat, staring out the window, trying not to feel or think and failing at both. Something makes her look at the old pickup at the other pump.

A scrawny girl, maybe ten, sits in the pick up stroking the old hound dog beside her. Her father returns, handing her a string of red licorice, before leaning across to pull her door shut. The girl smiles at Maggie before they drive off.

Frankie gets back into the rental, sees Maggie smiling.

MAGGIE
You ever own a dog?

FRANKIE
Nope. Close as I ever came was a middleweight from Barstow.

He starts the car and they pull out.

MAGGIE
My daddy had a German Shepard, Axel. Axel's hindquarters were so bad he had to drag himself room to room by his front legs. Me and Mardell'd bust up watchin' him scoot cross the kitchen floor. Daddy was so sick by then, he couldn't hardly stand himself, but one morning he got up, carried Axel to his rig and the two of them went off into the woods, singing and howling.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED: 105

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Wasn't till he got home alone that night that I saw the shovel in the truck.
(beat)
Sure miss watchin' the two of them together.

They drive past the shacks set in the cedars and oaks.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I got nobody but you, Frankie.

FRANKIE
Yeah, you got me. Till we find you a manager.

And she smiles.

MAGGIE
Can you stop just up here?

106 INT. ROADSIDE DINER -- NIGHT 106

The booths are so worn that one would think General Lee dropped off here for a coffee on the way to Gettysburg. A piece of lemon pie sits in front of Frankie. He puts a forkful in his mouth and his expression tells us everything.

FRANKIE
I could die a happy man right now.

MAGGIE
I used to come here with Daddy.

FRANKIE
Is this place for sale? Cause I have some savings.

Maggie watches him eat, every bite an explosion of pleasure.

107 INT. HIT PIT - FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY 107

Frankie's on the phone.

FRANKIE
Fine.
(MORE)

He hangs up, looks out at the gym. Sees DANGER hunched over the ice chest, closely inspecting a bottle of frozen water. Scrap appears in the doorway with a bucket and mop.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: 107

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
What the hell is Danger looking at?

Scrap turns and looks.

SCRAP
Appears to be another bottle of water.

Scrap starts on his way again.

FRANKIE
Hey. Going to Vegas, wanna come?

SCRAP
Seen you suffer over a nickel slot. My heart can't take that kinda pounding anymore.

FRANKIE
She got her title fight. Blue Bear. Million dollars, whacked down the middle.

SCRAP
That's real good. Real good.

FRANKIE
Could use a good second. Can't find one; thought I'd ask you.

SCRAP
...Why the hell would I want to do that?

FRANKIE
Because, you're a half-blind old fool who never got there yourself and I thought you'd like to see what it felt like to be in the ring at a title match. 'Scuse me for feeling sorry for ya.

Frankie didn't mean this to hurt.

SCRAP
Naw, you pick up somebody in Vegas. Somebody with young hands.

FRANKIE
Oh, don't start crying; I already got one girl.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (2) 107

SCRAP
I leave this place for one day, you got any idea what it'll look like when I get back?

FRANKIE
Lot like it does right now?

SCRAP
Appreciate the offer.

FRANKIE
...Fine.

Frankie heads out.

SCRAP
You tell Maggie not to come back here without no belt.

Frankie nods, walks out. Scrap watches him go.

SCRAP V.O.
The rule was don't run from the pain, step into it. But there's another rule: when something's over it's over.

Scrap sees Danger next to him, the frozen water in his hand.

DANGER
Mist Scrap? I got a question, but I feel stupid askin' it.

SCRAP
There's no such thing as a stupid question, Danger.

Danger looks at the bottle, tries to formulate the thought.

SCRAP V.O.
Course, soon as you make a rule, someone's there to break it.

DANGER
How'd you get the ice in here through this little tiny hole? I been thinkin' on it, can't figure it out.

SCRAP
...Why don't I show you?

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (3) 107

DANGER
You can do that? You can show me?

SCRAP
Believe I can.

As they walk into the back...

DANGER
And I was thinkin' I might be ready for a fight.

SCRAP
You do, do ya?

DANGER
You don't?

SCRAP
Oh, I don't know, you're comin' along.

108 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- DAY 108

Excited, Maggie finishes packing as Frankie enters.

FRANKIE
Got the tickets, let's go.

MAGGIE
So, we're flying?

FRANKIE
You want to drive?

MAGGIE
...You're asking me?

FRANKIE
I'm asking. You want to fly or drive?

MAGGIE
So, I finally get to decide something?

FRANKIE
That's what I'm saying.

MAGGIE
Fine. Fly there, drive back.

108 CONTINUED: 108

FRANKIE
That's the stupidest thing I ever heard. How the hell we gonna do that?!

MAGGIE
You said it was up to me.

She heads out with her suitcase. Frankie follows, knowing clearly there's a good reason he doesn't train women.

SCRAP V.O.
There's no real way to know what'd happen if you did one thing and not the other.

109 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT 109

Danger works himself into a sweat.

SCRAP V.O.
Maybe you'd still just end up in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Scrap passes Shawrelle coming out of the dressing room.

SHAWRELLE
Toilet overflowin'.

Scrap tosses him a disgusted look and exits to get his bucket. Shawrelle looks around.

110 IN THE DRESSING ROOM 110

The place is flooded, Scrap steps right into it.

SCRAP
Jesus-H-Mother-of-God.

Scrap jams his hand down the back of the tank, pulls up the lever, stops the flow, and reacts to what we don't see.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
Stupid old man, coulda been sittin' in The Mirage having a MaiTai and watchin' naked girls.
(MORE)

ANGLE ON SINK - TIME CUT

Scrap empties a bucket of filthy water.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED: 110

ANGLE IN BOOTH - TIME CUT

Scrap flushes the toilet.

ANGLE ON FLOOR - TIME CUT

He mops up the last of it. Stops as he hears shouting from the gym. He drops the mop and strides toward the door, comes out to see:

DANGER AND SHAWRELLE

in the ring at the far side of the gym, Shawrelle giving Danger a terrible beating.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
HEY!

Scrap springs out of the hall, but his first step is bad -- a patch of unmopped water. Scrap goes sprawling.

Shawrelle doubles up his punches as Scrap scrambles for the ring. Danger's other eye bursts open, but Shawrelle can't knock him down.

Scrap careens off the fighters standing, stunned, around the ring. He lunges through the ropes and slams Shawrelle in the chest, shoving him to the far corner.

Scrap cradles Danger's swollen head in his hands -- his eyes staring back like a dumb animal, so sick he's ready to die, bloody slobber spilling from his mouth.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
It's okay. It's okay.

THE FIGHTERS

Standing around come to life again; some giving Shawrelle ugly stares, others just walking off, one touching Danger's shoulder as Scrap lowers him to the bench.

DANGER
How'd I do, Mist Scrap?

SCRAP
You done great, Danger, you my man, you a rock.

Shawrelle taunts from the ring.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED: (2) 110

SHAWRELLE
Flippy, you can't be done. You ain't thrown a punch.

Scrap stays focused on Danger.

SCRAP
Anybody can lose one fight. You come back from this, be the next champion of the world.

Danger offers a tiny smile through his bloody teeth.

DANGER
No, I won't, Mist Scrap. I shoulda knowed.

Scrap can't look in his eyes. He reaches for Danger's gloves.

SCRAP
Here, baby, let me help you.

DANGER
I can do her, just untie the knots.

Scrap does and Danger manages to tug them off.

SHAWRELLE
Don't take your gloves off, Danger. You ain't even used em yet.

SCRAP
(to Danger)
I borrow these for a minute?

Scrap pulls on Danger's old gloves and climbs into the ring. Shawrelle laughs at the sight.

SHAWRELLE
Oh, look, I get to fight a retard and an old man.

And that's the last word out of his mouth, as Scrap nails him with a jab that could stun an elephant. But Shawrelle isn't going down that easy. He slams Scrap on the side of his head, same side as his bad eye. Scrap staggers but he doesn't go down. Shawrelle tries the same shot but Scrap slips the punch, rotates into a half crouch and hits Shawrelle with a left hook to the liver.

Shawrelle dances back. Scrap stalks him. Shawrelle throws a powerful combination. Scrap blocks and keeps coming.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED: (3) 110

Shawrelle charges. Scrap steps aside, hits him with another left hook to the liver, then an uppercut to the jaw that snaps Shawrelle's head and puts the boy down and out.

Scrap stands over Shawrelle, pulls off his gloves.

SCRAP
One hundred and ten.

He rolls him over with his toe, sees Shawrelle swimming toward consciousness. Spits.

SCRAP (CONT'D)
Get a job, punk.

Shawrelle spits out a red tooth. Scrap looks to:

THE BENCH

Danger isn't there.

111 EXT. THE HIT PIT -- NIGHT 111

Scrap steps out onto the sidewalk, looks up and down the empty street. Danger is gone.

112 INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO ARENA - THE NEXT NIGHT 112

Maggie's coiled in her robe, looking down the mouth of the corridor into the arena, where we hear the announcer and the murmur of the crowd. Frankie stands beside her, along with a SECOND they picked up here in town. From the arena we hear a lone FAN shout out:

FAN
Ma-cush-la!

It's echoed by another.

SECOND FAN
Ma-cush-la!

Maggie looks to Frankie with the question.

FRANKIE
Win this, I'll tell you what it means.

An ASSISTANT DIRECTOR cues them. Showtime.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
By the way, I got you some pipers.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED: 112

And they walk down the tunnel to the sound of BAGPIPES...and the pipers lead her in.

113 INT. SCRAP'S ROOM 113

Scrap sits on the edge of his cot watching TV, icing his swollen fist, as they pipe Maggie into the ring.

RING ANNOUNCER
--the WBA Welterweight champion of the world, Billie The Blue Bear Astrakhov!

The Bear drops her electric blue robe, pulls off her Russian fur hat, revealing a polished, shaved head. She flexes her massive arms.

SCRAP
Sweet Jesus.

114 AT THE ARENA 114

Maggie, in pale green, looks iridescent under the colored lights. She stands in her corner serious and hard. Frankie steps in close to her face.

FRANKIE
Box her. Stick that jab into her big tits till they turn blue and fall off.

Maggie nods. The bell rings, the Bear charges, throwing a right-lead haymaker.

Maggie slips under and, stepping to her left, drills the Bear with a right to the gut, hitting the sweat spot of the solar plexus, and the Bear goes down gasping for air.

The crowd leaps to it's feet, the cheers deafening.

FANS
Ma-cush-la!

But at the count of eight the Bear gets up smiling and comes after Maggie, throwing punch after punch. Maggie bobs and weaves like mercury lapping in a dish.

ANGLE ON FRANKIE AND THE SECOND

SECOND
(in awe of Maggie)
Look at the way she moves.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED: 114

FRANKIE
Yeah.

Frankie smiles, proud.

BACK IN THE RING

Maggie hurts the Bear with a combination. The Bear grabs her. The ref separates them. The Bear swings quickly, barely grazing Maggie.

115 IN THE HIT PIT 115

A few fighters gather around a radio, listening to the fight.

116 BACK IN THE ARENA 116

Maggie stings the Bear again. This time the Russian holds on to the BELL.

MAGGIE'S SECOND

grabs for the stool, Frankie snatches it.

FRANKIE
I'll get it-I'll get it.

Frankie hefts the heavy stool through the ropes. He has it in place before Maggie gets to the corner. They water and grease her.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Fight from the outside. You hearin' that?

MAGGIE
Always hear your voice, boss.

IN THE BEAR'S CORNER

Her manager talks to her. The Bear just stares at Maggie.

IN THE STANDS

A group of Irish Fans stand, shouting

IRISH FANS
Mo Cuishle!!

The bell rings and

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED: 116

MAGGIE

goes in firing stinging jabs. Touching her, turning her, taking her balance.

117 INT. HIT PIT 117

The fighters shout encouragements.

RADIO COMMENTATOR
The challenger darts in, lands a combination to the head and body, another one. And a right hook stuns the champ.

118 IN SCRAP'S ROOM 118

Scrap inches closer to the edge of the cot

ON THE SCREEN

Billie grabs Maggie, trying to turn the match into a brawl.

119 IN THE ARENA 119

Billie catches Maggie with an elbow, then tries to jam her palm into Maggie's nose. Misses. The ref pushes them apart.

Maggie works her from the outside, shooting jabs into Billie's chest like she's ramming her with the end of a two by four.

The bell sounds. Frankie swings the stool through the ropes.

120 IN SCRAP'S ROOM 120

Scrap leans back a bit, realizes he's sweating.

121 IN THE ARENA 121

The BELL sounds and Maggie springs out of her corner. The Bear comes out throwing wild. SLAM. Maggie rocks the Bear onto her heels and moves in with a one-two hook that puts Billie on the canvas.

FRANKIE

rises as the ref COUNTS.

FRANKIE
Stay down, you bitch.

121 CONTINUED: 121

REF
Four, five...

The Bear bounces up and grabs Maggie, tries to throw her to the mat. The ref is right in there --

REF (CONT'D)
Do that again, it'll cost you a point!

Billie ignores him, shoves Maggie again. The ref turns to the scorers table and signals them to...

REF (CONT'D)
Take away a point.

And with his back turned he doesn't see the Bear catch Maggie with an elbow.

FRANKIE

screams and points as..

A GASH

opens up over Maggie's left eye. The bell sounds.

FRANKIE

swings in the stool. MAGGIE drops onto it. Her second opens up his kit. Frankie takes over, going to work on the cut.

FRANKIE
It'll be okay. It'll be okay.

MAGGIE
Got no doubt, boss.

With a FLASH we're back in...

122 THE FIGHT 122

Maggie's eye is almost swollen closed. It doesn't stop her from nailing Billie repeatedly, knocking the Bear back into the ropes. But Billie stays up. Head-butts Maggie.

REF
Two points! You're warned!

Maggie takes the fight to Billie again. Billie head-butts her. The ref pushes her back, holds up five fingers and yells. FRANKIE screams over the din. The BELL sounds and Frankie heaves the stool in before it stops ringing.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED: 122

Maggie drops onto it. Frankie ices her eye.

MAGGIE
Eyes are blurring, boss.

Frankie washes her eye.

FRANKIE
How many eyes you need to fight?

MAGGIE
One's enough. Now what I do about the Bear?

FRANKIE
You know how to step outside and go to the liver with a right hook?

MAGGIE
Been doin' that. She's made of steel.

FRANKIE
This time don't go to the liver, go to the cheek of her big dyke ass. Stick your fist into her sciatic like a dagger and keep stickin' it.

MAGGIE
Won't the ref see that?

FRANKIE
Not if you keep the Bear between you and him.

The five second warning. FLASH

MAGGIE

drives her fist into the Bear's right cheek. Billie squawks in pain. The Bear's manager yells. As the ref turns his head Maggie doubles up into the cheek and the Bears leg buckles in pain. FLASH.

123 MAGGIE 123

slams punch after punch into the Bear's gut and head as the crowd SCREAMS. FLASH.

124 MAGGIE 124

jumps the Russian with combinations that has her head wobbling and the crowd on its feet.

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED: 124

She clobbers Billie with a hook to the jaw and the Russian goes down to one knee. The ref counts as...

125 BACK AT THE HIT PIT 125

Scrap holds his breath.

126 BACK IN THE ARENA 126

The Bear rises at nine. Maggie throws another combination, turning the Bear's legs to jelly.

SCRAP V.O.
The ref was about to stop the fight...

Maggie's arm cocks for a slam to the head, an open shot. The BELL rings.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
...when the bell rang.

And we go into excruciating slow motion.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
One more punch woulda put the Bear on the mat. But Maggie caught her punch and pulled it back.

FRANKIE

hefts the stool through the ropes.

MAGGIE

sees Frankie, drops her hands and turns to her right.

THE BEAR

rips a punch into Maggie's blind eye. Caught off balance, Maggie stumbles.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
The late punch scrambled Maggie's inner ear. Her legs buckled. She never been knocked down, and her mind rebelled against the thought.

Maggie tries to plant her foot, fails.

Frankie looks up, sees Maggie falling toward the stool. Grabs for it. Maggie tries to twist around to break her fall. Twists too hard.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED: 126

Her neck comes down full force on the metal band of the stool. Silence. Just the sound of a neck breaking.

All we hear now is Maggie's breathing. Frankie screams as Maggie slumps to her side on the mat.

127 SCRAP 127

watches in stunned horror.

128 MAGGIE'S POV 128

She sees Frankie over her, stretching her flat, the ring doctors running toward her. Sees the ref pushing Billie back. Even Billie seems stunned.

MAGGIE

exhales. Her eyes blink. But the next breath doesn't come. Her eyes close. BLACK. Silence.

Then she BREATHES and we HEAR...

PARAMEDIC (V.O.)
That's right, breathe for me.

FADE UP to see:

129 MAGGIE'S POV 129

She's being carried on a stretcher as a PARAMEDIC works the ambu-bag covering her face.

PARAMEDIC
Good girl, breathe!

Through fluttering eyes she glimpses Frankie above her, then slips back into unconsciousness. BLACK. We hear the sound of a VENTILATOR and FADE UP:

130 MAGGIE'S POV - LAS VEGAS GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY 130

DOCTORS work over her, talking in mumbled voices...BLACK. FADE UP.

131 MAGGIE'S POV - FRANKIE 131

strokes her hair, a two day growth on his face. He says something reassuring, she can't hear it. BLACK. FADE UP.

131 CONTINUED: 131

MAGGIE'S POV - ANOTHER DOCTOR

shines a light in Maggie's eyes. Asks her something. BLACK. FADE UP.

132 MAGGIE'S POV - THE ICU CEILING 132

The camera tilts to a mirror in the corner of the room. In it Maggie sees herself, lying motionless on the bed, hooked up to machines, the ventilator breathing for her. And we finally see...

MAGGIE'S FACE

taking this in.

MAGGIE
Oh, God.

She closes her eyes. BLACK.

FRANKIE (V.O.)
How ya doin', darlin'?

133 MAGGIE 133

opens her eyes. Sees Frankie, another three days growth on his face.

MAGGIE
You growin' a beard, boss?

FRANKIE
Thought it might help with the women.

MAGGIE
Can't say it does.

And she closes her eyes again, and Frankie strokes her head.

134 INT. WAITING ROOM -- DAY 134

Frankie waits. Scrap sits beside him, a bag in his hand.

SCRAP
Brought you some clothes. Forgot to give them to you. How's she doing today?

It takes a moment to answer.

134 CONTINUED: 134

FRANKIE
She's okay.

SCRAP
Think they'll let me in to see her?

FRANKIE
Yeah. Told them I was her father. You were her grandfather.

Scrap tries out a smile. Two doctors step out of ICU.

DOCTOR #1
Mr. Dunn?

135 INT. ICU -- MOMENTS LATER 135

Scrap sits with Maggie. She's still doped up.

SCRAP
It hurt much?

MAGGIE
Don't hurt at all.

SCRAP
That's good.

MAGGIE
Where's Frankie?

SCRAP
Talking to the doctors. No doubt tellin' them how to do their job.

MAGGIE
They're telling him I'm a C1 and C2 complete. Means my spinal cord's so broke they'll never be able to fix it. Gonna be frozen like this the rest of my life.

Scrap doesn't know what to say.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Asked them to tell him. Don't know how he's gonna take it.
(beat)
You see the fight?

SCRAP
Course I did. You had her cold.

135 CONTINUED: 135

MAGGIE
I shouldn'ta dropped my hands. I shouldn'ta turned. Always protect yourself, how many times he tell me that?

SCRAP
He does like to repeat himself.

MAGGIE
Will you tell him I'm real sorry?

SCRAP
I'll do no such thing.

She closes her eyes.

136 INT. WAITING ROOM -- A SHORT TIME LATER 136

Scrap comes out to find Frankie leaning against the wall. Scrap stands there a moment.

SCRAP
Damndest thing, huh?
(finally)
So, what's the plan? I know you got one, so you might as well tell me.

Frankie turns and looks him in the eye.

FRANKIE
This is your fault. Her in there like that. You kept after me till I trained her. I knew I shouldn't. Not a girl. Everything told me not to. Everything but you.

Frankie walks back to Maggie's room. Leaving Scrap destroyed.

137 INT. ICU -- CONTINUOUS 137

Frankie pulls up a chair, leans close to Maggie.

FRANKIE
I'm gonna get you outta here. These doctors don't know squat. If they did, they wouldn't be living in a desert. Soon as you can be moved, we're taking you someplace where they actually studied medicine. You just sleep now, okay?

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: 137

She nods, closes her eyes again.

138 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD -- ANOTHER DAY 138

Maggie opens her eyes to find a nurse and a resident inserting a tube in her throat.

SCRAP V.O.
Maggie couldn't eat right, so they fed her through a stomach tube. Then she got pneumonia, her lungs filled with fluid and had to be pumped out.

Maggie closes her eyes. They start the pump.

139 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD -- ANOTHER DAY 139

She opens her eyes to find Frankie giving her a sponge bath.

MAGGIE
They got nurses for that, you know.

FRANKIE
They're amateurs.

SCRAP V.O.
She developed skin ulcers because she couldn't change positions.

140 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD -- ANOTHER DAY 140

Frankie watches from the hall as another nurse and resident roll Maggie on her side.

SCRAP V.O.
There were blood clots in her legs and problems with hemoglobin. To induce a daily bowel movement, she was placed on her side and pressure was applied to her lower abdomen.

We can't see what the resident is doing, but we can assume he's inserting tube in her rectum. Maggie catches Frankie's eye. He gives her a little smile.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
She was humiliated every moment of every day.

She smiles back for him.

141 INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- DAY 141

Frankie's on the phone. Hangs up, checks a pad, dials again.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie must have called every hospital in America, looking for somebody who'd tell him they could fix her. Came close twice; till they checked her over, said there was nothing to be done.

Frankie hangs up. Walks off down the hall,

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Took two months till she was stable enough to move.

142 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD - LATE AFTERNOON 142

Maggie lies twisted on her side. She opens her eyes, sees Frankie.

FRANKIE
How ya doin', darlin'?

MAGGIE
Well, you know, they got tubes stickin' up me in places I'd rather not think about.

FRANKIE
Found two good rehab clinics. You want to hear about them?

She has something on her mind, but doesn't say it.

MAGGIE
...Sure.

FRANKIE
There's a real good place in Kansas City, only couple hours from your momma's house. Thought you might like that.

MAGGIE
Mamma call yet?

FRANKIE
It's hard to get through here.

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED: 142

MAGGIE
Yeah.
(beat)
Where's the other place?

FRANKIE
Downtown L.A.

MAGGIE
I'd rather go with you, boss.

FRANKIE
Good.

143 EXT. DESERT -- EVENING 143

A bright, white ambulance cuts a path in the asphalt.

SCRAP V.O.
They made the six-hour trip by ambulance.

144 INT. AMBULANCE -- CONTINUOUS 144

Maggie motions for Frankie to lean closer, so that the attending pulmonologist can't hear her. Frankie does.

MAGGIE
Fly there, drive back.

And she laughs. And Frankie has to smile.

145 EXT. DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 145

The ambulance disappears into the horizon.

146 EXT. EVERGREEN REHABILITATION CENTER -- DAY 146

A stucco building in downtown L.A. Behind the facade lies a expanse of landscaped lawn, California sycamores and palms.

147 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- DAY 147

Frankie watches from the nearest chair as the nurses and resident go through the painstaking procedure of getting Maggie into her special wheelchair.

SCRAP V.O.
Evergreen was a nice place. They took good care of Maggie. She wouldn't have complained if they hadn't.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED: 147

A series of QUICK CUTS: the attendants check the tubes into her bladder, her stomach, and through the front of her neck;

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
It took several hours every day to get her ready for the wheelchair.

They stretch her arms and legs; lift her into the wheelchair; strap her in; switch her respirator to the one built into the wheelchair.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Since she couldn't breathe on her own, her respirators were always on. Oxygen was pumped into her twenty-four hours a day.

She turns her head to see Frankie. He gives her a wink.

148 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- MORNING 148

Maggie's eyes are closed when Frankie enters with a small bunch of daisies. He finds something to put them in, then realizes that she's watching him.

MAGGIE
You ever heard of dysreflexia, boss?

FRANKIE
Can't say I have.

MAGGIE
It's somethin' that happens real quick, like when you get a kink in your pee tube? Gets your heartbeat all to rushin'.

FRANKIE
That happen to you?

MAGGIE
Last night.

FRANKIE
(rising)
I'll talk to the doctors.

MAGGIE
No, sit down.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED: 148

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(this is hard)
Awful as it is when your heart's fixin' to explode, it made me happy, boss. 'Cause I thought I'd be free of this mess. I almost made it, too. Then they brought me back to bein' this same old snowman, same old twisted-up snowman wishin' to God it was July.

FRANKIE
Ah, Jesus, Maggie. I knew I was wrong to train you.

MAGGIE
Don't say that. Don't you ever say that. Workin' with you was the only time since Daddy passed I had respect. You'd take that away from me?

FRANKIE
...No.

MAGGIE
All right then.
(beat)
We almost did her, too, didn't we, boss? Huh? Daddy'd a been proud.

Frankie squeezes her hand. It takes a moment for him to realize that she can't feel it. The phone beside her bed rings. Frankie picks it up.

FRANKIE
Maggie's room... Just a second.
(to Maggie)
It's your brother.

Maggie can't stop her face from brightening. Frankie holds the phone next to her ear.

MAGGIE
(into phone)
J.D.?...When'd you get out?... Is Mamma there?... No, tell her--... Really, it's...Okay. Yeah. Bye.
(MORE)

She nods to Frankie. He hangs up.

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED: (2) 148

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
He says Mamma can't stop crying.
(beat)
They're coming to see me.

Maggie smiles so hard she almost cries.

SCRAP V.O.
Knowing something ain't likely to change doesn't stop a person from wishing it would.

149 INT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- DAY 149

Frankie sits alone in the church. He's never prayed this hard in his life.

150 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- DAY 150

Maggie sits in her wheelchair in the visiting room, taking in the sun. There's even a little color in her gaunt face. Frankie sits beside her. She's watching the parking lot, cars coming in and out.

MAGGIE
I tell you about when we all got Chicken Pox?

FRANKIE
We?

MAGGIE
Me, Mardell and J.D. Daddy was on a long-haul out to California and Mamma didn't hold with no doctors. But we're all makin' a terrible fuss. So she packs us up and we drive forty-two miles to the Stop and Go in Domain, where Mamma buys us super-size Cherry Slurpees. Tells us that'll fix us up. It doesn't, of course. So, we camp in the parking lot all night, drinking Cherry Slurpees. And damned, if in the morning we don't all feel better.
(beat)
Mamma mighta changed after daddy passed; but something real wrong, she always knew how to make us feel better.
(MORE)

She looks back at the parking lot.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED: 150

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You check the hotel?

FRANKIE
Only been a week, hardly had time to drive here yet.

DISSOLVE TO:

151 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- VISITING ROOM -- ANOTHER DAY 151

Maggie sleeping in her chair, angled to see the parking lot. Frankie beside her, reading a book.

SCRAP V.O.
She waited by the window every day for the next two weeks.

152 INT. HIT PIT -- EVENING 152

Frankie is on his phone in the office.

SCRAP V.O.
And Frankie called their hotel every day. Learned they'd checked in six days earlier. Kept leaving messages, which were never returned.

Frankie hangs up, looks to the door, sees SCRAP moving past. Scrap looks at him. Frankie goes back to work.

153 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- VISITING ROOM -- ANOTHER DAY 153

Maggie wakes to find Frankie reading aloud.

FRANKIE
Ach grá fir óig is é bhreoigh go fol las mé.

MAGGIE
Whatcha doin'?

FRANKIE
Teaching you Gaelic.

MAGGIE
While I'm sleeping?

FRANKIE
Heard it works.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED: 153

MAGGIE
Mo Cuishle in there?

FRANKIE
Ain't seen it yet.

MAGGIE
You don't have to hang around all day.

FRANKIE
I like it here. If you weren't here I might just come and sit, read a book just cause I wanted to.

MAGGIE
Mamma will be here soon, share some of the burden.

FRANKIE
Ain't no burden. Say this: ach grá fir óig.

Maggie tries her best.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Jesus that's terrible, try it again.

Maggie does.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Stop-stop, you're killing it. Here's what you're saying.
(reads)
I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree, and a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.
(skips down)
And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow, Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings.

A beat, then...

MAGGIE
You gonna build a cabin, boss?

FRANKIE
Me?

153 CONTINUED: (2) 153

MAGGIE
You know, when you quit all this.

FRANKIE
Never gonna quit. I'd miss the stink.

MAGGIE
Think that's true? Cause I could see you there, real easy, with your books and lemon pie.

FRANKIE
...You wanna go live in a cabin?

MAGGIE
I could learn how to bake.

FRANKIE
Maybe I'll start looking then.

And they sit there, smiling at their little shared joke.

154 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- DAY 154

Maggie lies on her side, the DOCTOR examines Maggie's leg. It's purple and ulcerated. He drops the sheet back over it.

MAGGIE
Don't smell real pretty, does it, Doc?

DOCTOR #2
We may have to lose it, Maggie.

Maggie nods. She doesn't look to Frankie. Who wouldn't know how to put a good spin on this if he tried forever.

155 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - CORRIDOR -- DAY 155

Frankie dials the pay phone. Hears a door open at the far end of the hall. Sees:

EARLINE, MARDELL AND J.D.

enter.

FRANKIE

Almost smiles. Till he see Mardell and J.D.'s T-shirts. Universal Studios. Disneyland. A man in a suit follows them down the hall. Frankie meets them half way.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED: 155

FRANKIE
Frankie Dunn, we met at your house.

EARLINE
Where's my little girl?

FRANKIE
Maybe it'd be a good idea to go back to your hotel and change. She doesn't know you've been here a week visiting Mickey and Daffy.

J.D.
We've got business with my sister. Just tell us where she is.

FRANKIE
Take it you're J.D.
(to man in suit)
Take it you're the business.
(to Earline)
Maybe you missed a few rides, maybe you should go back and I'll tell Maggie you couldn't make it.

EARLINE
I drove all the way here to take care of my child and you're suggesting I'm not a good mother? Mary M can't go nowhere; if we coulda taken her to Disneyland we woulda.

LAWYER
(to passing nurse)
Margaret Fitzgerald?

NURSE
Down here.

Frankie thinks about stopping them. Knows he can't. J.D. bumps Frankie's shoulder in passing.

Frankie waits there as they disappear into her room. He walks to the window, knowing whatever's going on in that room isn't going to be good. He goes to the soda machine, deposits some change. Nothing comes out. He kicks it.

156 CORRIDOR -- MOMENTS LATER 156

Frankie appears with a cup of coffee. The door to Maggie's ward is closed. He walks to where he can see through the floor to ceiling window. Inside:

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: 156

MAGGIE AND FAMILY

have a good laugh at something.

FRANKIE

paces away. Can't stand to watch them break her heart. But he goes back anyway, in time to see:

EARLINE

showing her a document, confusion on Maggie's face.

FRANKIE

has had enough. He opens the door and steps through. Maggie looks up to him, her face grey.

FRANKIE
How we all doing here?

EARLINE
Sorry, darlin', but we ain't got a lotta time. Mr. Johnson's charging us a lot of money to be here to make sure this is done proper.

FRANKIE
Why don't you leave that and I'll read it to her.

J.D.
You family? You stay out of this.

MAGGIE
Read it to me, Mamma.

EARLINE
It s just something legal, to protect your money.

MAGGIE
Mamma, you don't have to worry, the Boxing Commission's paying for all this. Everything.

EARLINE
But what if they don't, Mary M? Mr. Johnson says they could take my house.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: (2) 156

LAWYER
If you assign your assets to your mother, no one will be able to touch them.

J.D.
Not doctors, not funeral expenses, nothin'.

FRANKIE
Fine, so leave it and --

MAGGIE
-- Mr. Dunn, with respect, this isn't your business.

That stops Frankie dead.

FRANKIE
Okay, I'll just wait out in the hall.

He steps out, leaves the door open.

EARLINE
You been a good daughter, Mary M. You sign that paper, it'll take care of your family, the way your daddy woulda wanted you to. How do you make your mark? Can you hold a pen?

MARDELL
She gotta do it with her teeth, mamma. You gotta put it in her mouth.

EARLINE
(holding out pen)
Here you go, darlin'.

MAGGIE
You see the fight, momma?

EARLINE
Honey, you know how I feel about that.

MAGGIE
I did pretty good.

EARLINE
You lost, darlin'. Ain't your fault, way I heard it, but you lost.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: (3) 156

EARLINE (CONT'D)
Don't wanna lose the rest of what you got left.

Earline eases the pen into Maggie's mouth. Maggie bites down on it. Then lets it fall out.

MAGGIE
What happened to you, Mamma?

EARLINE
What's that supposed to mean?

MAGGIE
Mamma, you take Mardell and J.D. and get home. Before I tell that lawyer there that you were so worried about your welfare you never signed those house papers like you were supposed to. So, any time I feel like it, I can sell it out from under your fat, lazy hillbilly asses. And if you ever come back, that's exactly what I'll do.

157 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER VISITING ROOM 157

The family heads for the hills. Frankie watches them go, then walks into...

158 MAGGIE'S ROOM 158

Maggie is near tears.

FRANKIE
Thought somebody should count to ten.

Maggie laughs. Frankie awkwardly hugs her, puts her head on his shoulder, but she refuses to cry.

DISSOLVE TO:

159 FRANKIE 159

sitting alone in Maggie's ward, her bed gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

160 MAGGIE'S BED 160

is back. Her leg is missing. She opens her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED: 160

MAGGIE
They took my leg, boss.

He kisses her head. She closes her eyes again.

FRANKIE
It'll be okay. You hear me?

MAGGIE
Always hear your voice, boss.

161 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- EVENING 161

Frankie opens his door and stops. On the floor lies an envelope, the same size and shape as the others in the shoebox. And he just stands there, staring at it. Broken.

162 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT 162

The place is dead quiet, save the sound of the night nurse passing in the hall. Maggie opens her eyes to see Frankie sitting there, reading some sort of catalogue. He looks up.

FRANKIE
You need anything?

MAGGIE
Need to know what Mo Cuishle means.

FRANKIE
You didn't win, don't have to tell you.

MAGGIE
You're the meanest man I ever met, no wonder nobody loves you. You remind me of my daddy.

FRANKIE
He musta been a good looking man.

Frankie goes back to reading.

MAGGIE
You ain't gonna make me talk more Yeats, are you?

FRANKIE
These are classes at City College.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: 162

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Thought I'd buy you one of those wheelchairs you can use by blowin' into a straw. Thought you might want to go to school.

MAGGIE
I got a favor to ask you, boss.

FRANKIE
Whatever you want.

MAGGIE
Remember what my daddy did for Axel?

FRANKIE
...Don't even say that.

MAGGIE
I can't be like this, Frankie. Not after what I done. I seen the world. People chanted my name. Well, not my name, some damn name you gave me, but they were chanting for me. I was in magazines. You think I ever dreamed that'd happen?
(beat)
I was born at two pound one and a half ounces. Daddy used to tell me I fought to get into this world and I'd fight my way out. That's all I wanna do, boss. I just don't want to fight you to do it.
(beat)
Only two people in this world I ever wanted to be proud of me. You are one. You proud of me, boss?

FRANKIE
You have to ask?

MAGGIE
I got what I needed, boss. Got it all. Don't let em keep takin' it away from me. Don't let me lie here till I can't hear those people chanting no more.

FRANKIE
...I can't do it. Please, don't ask me.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (2) 162

MAGGIE
I am asking.

FRANKIE
I can't.

She nods and turns her head away.

163 INT. FRANKIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT 163

The phone rings, waking Frankie from a dead sleep.

164 INT. FRANKIE'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS 164

He snatches it up.

FRANKIE
Hello?...

165 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT 165

Frankie hustles down the corridor, met by an intern, who talks as he tries to keep up.

SCRAP V.O.
In the middle of the night, Maggie'd found her own solution. She bit off her tongue.

Frankie fires into the room, shoving aside a male nurse to see Maggie, trying to fight away the doctor by banging her head back and forth. Frankie grabs her head, holds it, looks into her wild eyes as the doctor administers another shot.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Nearly bled to death before they stitched her up. She came round and ripped them out before Frankie even got there.

He soothes her and let's the shot take hold. Her eyes half closed and Frankie steps away to let the doctor in to stitch.

CORRIDOR

As Frankie paces, running his hand through his hair.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
They stitched her up again, padded the tongue so she couldn't bite, and gave her a tracheotomy, so she could breathe.

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED: 165

He looks back into the room.

166 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- MORNING 166

Maggie slowly comes out of it. Her eyes find Frankie

FRANKIE
What'd you do, darlin'?

He wipes away the tears that flow down her cheeks.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
You just gonna keep fighting me, aren't you?

She blinks once for yes.

167 EXT. STREETS -- NIGHT 167

Frankie walks, stops. Realizes that he is lost.

168 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- MORNING 168

Frankie sits on the steps, Father Horvath beside him.

FATHER HORVATH
You can't do it. You know that.

FRANKIE
I do. But she's thick, Father. You have no idea how hard it was to train her. I had to explain every little thing, things any other fighter would just do without asking, she'd want to know why and how and then she'd do it her way anyway. I got no idea how she ended up fighting for the title--didn't get there by listening to me.
(beat)
Now, all she wants is to die, and all I want to do is keep her with me. And God forgive me, but it feels like I'm committing a sin by doing it. By keeping her alive, I'm killing her. How do you find your way out of that?

FATHER HORVATH
You don't. You step aside, Frankie, you leave it with God.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED: 168

FRANKIE
She's not asking for God's help. She's asking for mine.

FATHER HORVATH
Frankie, I've seen you at mass almost every day for twenty-three years. Only person who goes to church that much is the kind who can't forgive himself for something. Whatever sins you're carrying, they're nothing compared to this. Forget about God or Heaven and Hell. If you do this thing, you'll be lost; somewhere so deep, you'll never find yourself again.

Frankie knows it's true.

169 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- AFTERNOON 169

Frankie sits with Maggie as she sleeps.

NURSE
We're keeping her sedated so she won't try that again.

Frankie nods, watches the nurse leave. Looks at Maggie's eyes fluttering, trying to find him. Lost. He stands, kisses her head.

170 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT 170

Frankie takes his cut bag out of the locked drawer, places it on his desk. Takes several bottles of adrenaline from the drawer, places them in the bag along with a syringe. He looks up and notices Scrap watching from the doorway.

SCRAP
I went in to see Maggie this morning. You musta been somewhere else.

FRANKIE
Yeah.

Frankie locks his drawer.

SCRAP
You got a fight I don't know about?

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED: 170

FRANKIE
...It wasn't your fault. I was wrong to say that.

SCRAP
Damn right it wasn't. I found you a fighter, and you made her the best fighter she coulda been.

FRANKIE
I killed her.

SCRAP
(scoffs)
Killed her. That girl walked in here with nothin' but guts, she had no hope of becoming what she needed to be. A year and a half later, she fought for the championship of the world. People die every day, washing dishes and sweeping floors, and their last thought is that they never got their shot. Cause of you, Maggie got hers. You know how many people in this world get that?
(beat)
If Maggie died today, I bet her last thought would be, I did pretty good.
(beat)
I could rest knowing that.

Frankie snaps shut his bag but doesn't lift it. A moment.

FRANKIE
Yeah.

He nods and then leaves.

171 EXT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT 171

Frankie sits in his car for an eternity.

172 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT 172

He walks down the corridor. The night nurse is on rounds, the desk lies empty. He steps into...

173 MAGGIE'S ROOM 173

She opens her eyes when she hears him. He smiles, gives her a kiss on the head. He looks her in the eyes, the question hanging there. She blinks once, he nods.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED: 173

He reaches into his bag.

FRANKIE
I'm going to put pressure on your neck, it'll cut off your air and put you to sleep, okay?

She blinks.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Then I'm gonna give you a shot...and you'll just stay sleeping.

She blinks, offers a small smile. He flicks off the alarm on her monitor, then puts his hand on her throat and looks her in the eye. Asks himself again if he can do this. She gives him a smile and blinks once. He leans in close to her ear and whispers.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Mo Cuishle. It means "my darling, my blood."

And she beams. Then blinks and closes her eyes for him. He applies pressure to her neck.

ANGLE ON HIS BAG

he removes a syringe, loads it up with adrenaline. His hand leaves the shot.

SCRAP V.O.
He gave her a single shot where they wouldn't see much of a needle mark. It was enough adrenaline to do the job a few times over. He didn't want her going through this again.

His hand drops the syringe back in his bag.

FRANKIE

feels for her pulse. Gone. Strokes her hair. Kisses her forehead. Takes his bag and walks out.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Then he walked out.
(MORE)

SCRAP

watches from the shadows.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED: (2) 173

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
His eyes as dry as a burning leaf.

DISSOLVE TO:

174 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT 174

Scrap sits on the bench.

SCRAP V.O.
I went back to the gym. Waited, figuring he'd turn up sooner or later.

DISSOLVE TO:

175 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 175

Scrap sits on the same bench. He looks up, smiles...

SCRAP V.O.
And that's when a ghost came through the door.

The person sits. It's Danger.

DANGER
Got to thinking what you said, Mist Scrap.

SCRAP
What was that, Danger?

DANGER
Anybody can lose one fight.

SCRAP
And that's the truth. Go put on your gloves, you missed a lot of training.

DANGER
Sure will, Mist. Scrap.

176 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS 176

Scrap opens the door, looks in. Frankie's desk lies bare, save a single key lying on the rough leather.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie never came back at all.

(CONTINUED)

176 CONTINUED: 176

BACK IN THE GYM

Danger throws his pitty-pat punches in the direction of the heavy bag. Scrap passes on his way out.

SCRAP
Danger, you hit something or I'm gonna toss your ass outta here.

Danger is so shocked he actually smacks the bag good and hard. He looks around, stunned and amazed and as pleased as hell. And as he throws his arms up in the air and opens his mouth...

177 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- DAY 177

Scrap opens Frankie's front door, pockets the single key.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie didn't leave a note.

178 IN THE KITCHEN 178

He checks the fridge. Empty.

SCRAP V.O.
No one knew where he went.

IN THE BEDROOM

He opens the closet. The clothes are gone. All that's left are a few shoe-boxes. Curious, Scrap reaches up for one.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
I hoped he'd gone to find you.

IN THE KITCHEN

sits at the single chair and opens the box, removing the letters one at a time. All are unopened. All addressed to Katy Dunn, an address in Indiana. All are marked "return to sender".

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Ask you one more time to forgive him.

179 INT. HIT PIT - FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT 179

Scanning across the pages of a long, hand written letter. We pick out phrases we heard Scrap say...*"Set in the cedars and oak trees, somewhere between nowhere and good-bye"...*

(CONTINUED)

179 CONTINUED: 179

"Boxing is an unnatural act..." We finally find Scrap's hand, writing the current page.

SCRAP V.O.
But I don't think he had anything left in his heart.

180 EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - MISSOURI -- NIGHT 180

The place looks familiar. It could be that place where Frankie and Maggie stopped. The place with the best lemon pie in the world.

SCRAP V.O.
I just hope he found someplace where he could find a little peace.

With its rough hewn exterior, it looks an awful lot like a cabin. Through the windows we think we catch a glimpse of Frankie behind the counter. But we can't be sure, maybe the owner just looked a little like him.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
But that's probably wishful thinking. No matter where he is... I thought you should know what kind of man your father really was.

FADE OUT:

the end